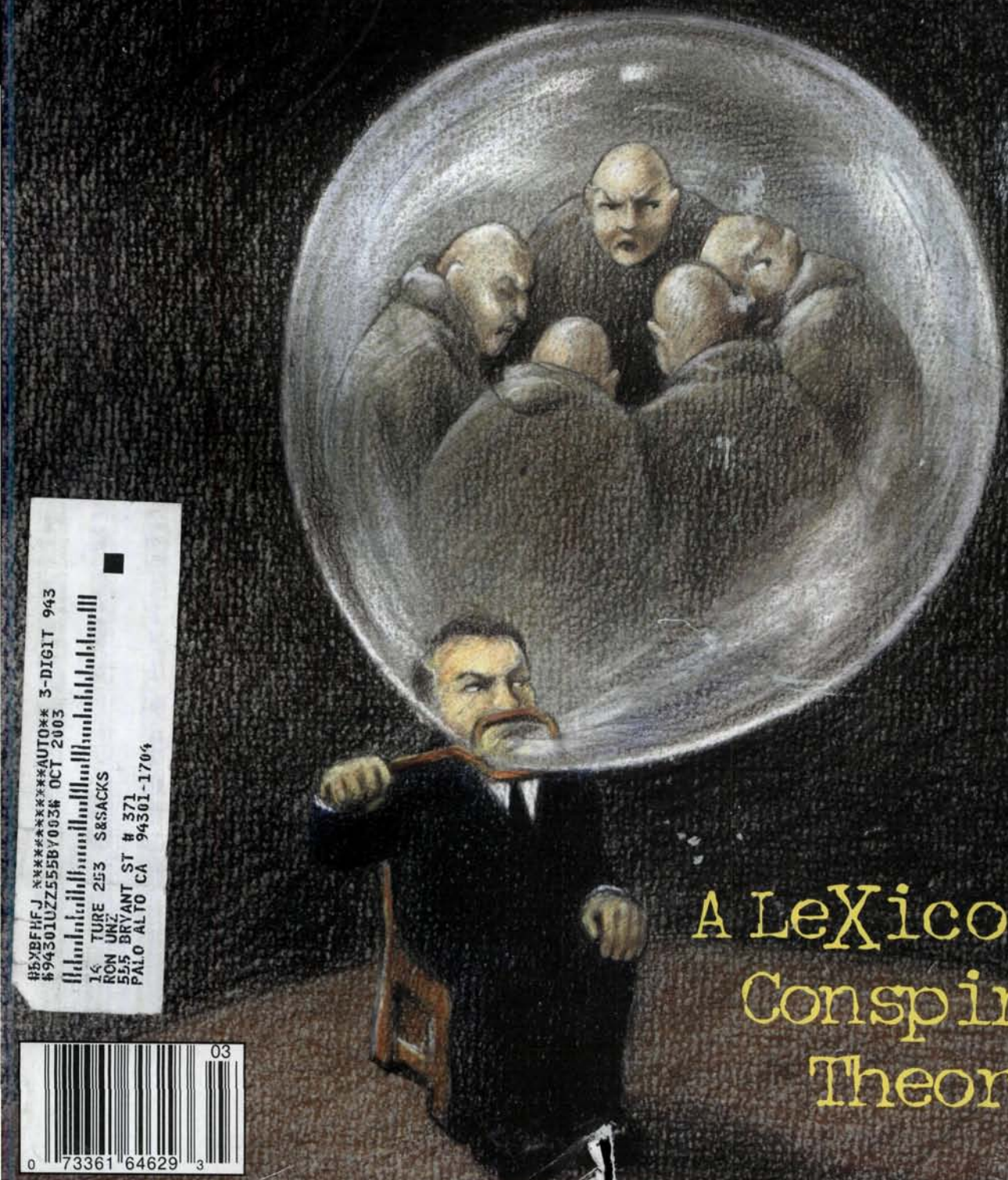
Chronicles

March 2001 A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE $3.95

The Truth Is Out There



A LeXicon of Conspiracy Theories

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Are You an Ostrich-Catholic ?

In the April 2, 2000 *Our Sunday Visitor*, a national Catholic paper, its Editor in Chief condemned what he called the "smears" and "slanders" directed at Catholic priests, and his case-in-point was the now-famous *Kansas City Star* study on homosexuality and AIDS in the priesthood, the verdict of which was: "it appears that priests are dying of AIDS at a rate at least four times that of the general U.S. population...."

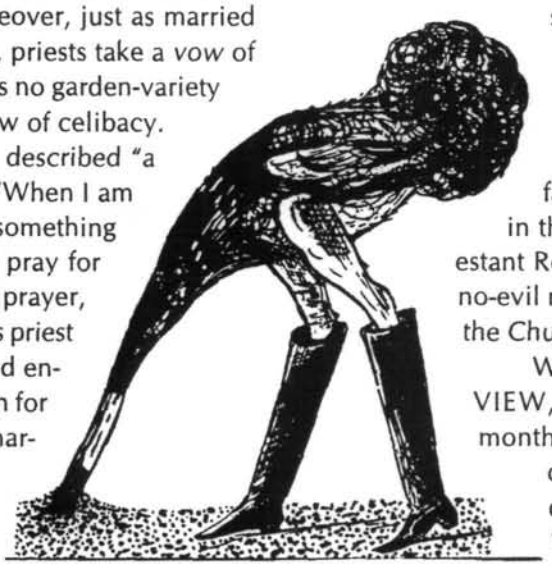
The Editor in Chief, a layman, allowed that some priests are "troubled and troubling," but added, "Is this so unusual?... If sin is no stranger to us, why do we expect it to be a stranger to our priests?" Fine. But we do expect our priests to be *models of* Catholic morality — don't we? Moreover, just as married couples take a *vow* of fidelity, priests take a *vow* of celibacy, and just as adultery is no garden-variety sin, neither is violating the vow of celibacy.

The Editor in Chief then described "a new ritual" he's worked out: "When I am wont to criticize a priest for something he has done or failed to do, I pray for him instead." Yes, we all need prayer, but let's say the Editor in Chief's priest has the kneelers ripped out and endorses pre-marital sex, abortion for teenage girls, and same-sex "marriage." Just pray? Or let's say the Editor in Chief's acolyte son is sodomized in the sacristy or his penitent daughter is raped in the Reconciliation Room. Just pray?

New Covenant is a Catholic spirituality magazine. In its July 1997 issue, its Editor, a layman, informed his readers of a "resolution" he made: "I will not criticize the clergy," adding "I'll extend that promise to others in the Church." Turning a blind eye to immorality, dissent, and heresy — what kind of spirituality is *this*?

Alas, granting priests immunity from criticism is all too common in the Church today, and it involves a misplaced piety. While the *office* of the priesthood is above criticism, priests who drag the nobility of their calling through the mud are *not*. Indeed, it's an unconscionable injustice to the office to let them get away with their odious words or deeds.

Imagine if all Catholics were silent about abuse and treachery. Why, sexual predators in the priesthood would never have been exposed and would still be mutilating the lives and even destroying the faith of fellow Catholics. And dissenters and heretics, who already control many Catholic institutions, would have virtually free rein.



It was the unwillingness to face and deal with the corruption in the Church that gave us the Protestant Reformation, and, sadly, this see-no-evil mentality is once again plaguing the Church.

We at the NEW OXFORD REVIEW, a feisty orthodox Catholic monthly magazine, are mounting an offensive to restore moral and doctrinal integrity to the Church. We "belong in every loyal Catholic's arsenal," says Fr. Joseph Fessio. We have "cheek," says *Newsweek* — and we're also cheap (see below). If you're a willfully naïve ostrich-Catholic, you wouldn't like us, so just put your head back in the sand. But if you want to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem, subscribe today!

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Chronicles

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On England's Joy

Christie Davies' enraged tirade against the Scots ("The English Rejoice at Scotland's Coming Independence," *Correspondence*, December 2000) was unusually bitter, even for the often bitter pages of *Chronicles*. There really is no point in dwelling on Davies' hysterical eruptions (which I am clipping out and saving as examples of undiluted, distilled nationalist venom), except to make the following observations: The Scots, having outlasted the Sassenach, will be just as happy to see him go as Professor Davies would have us believe he will be to go; the English will never be able to erase the influence of Scotland on English history, so they might as well get used to it; and finally, Professor Davies should never use the term "we English," unless he is sailing under false colors, because he bears a surname belonging not to the English, but to the Welsh, a pathetic remnant of a thoroughly defeated and nearly extinct race.

Thank God our forefathers left Christie Davies and his ilk behind when they came to America!

—*Russell McFadden*
West Columbia, TX

Professor Davies Replies:

I now understand how H.L. Mencken felt when Americans reacted to his account of the introduction of the bathtub in the way they did. I tried to plant clues everywhere as to the true meaning of this text—written by one descended from Scots on both sides—particularly when I wrote: "A belief in predestination has led to an amoral antinomianism" (*The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*? Rabbie Burns' "Holy Willie's Prayer" as applied to Clinton?) and "Adjust their dress before their next visit to London" (in which public places was this phrase, used by Churchill, displayed?). Clearly, the rest of the article has to be read in the same way.

The phrase "we English" is only ever used by those who are not. However, I am entertained by Mr. McFadden's comments about the Welsh, and I will pass them on anonymously to the leader (*Arweinydd*) of the *Urdd Ffascist Cymru*.

Scottish-Americans needing further reassurance should read my forthcoming book, *The Mirth of Nations* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Press), in which I devote an entire chapter to the evidences of, and reasons for, the superior sense of humor and intelligence of the Scots. For instance, I note that "an appreciation of the achievements of Scots such as Robert Adam, Henry Bell, Joseph Black, James Boswell, David Hume, Colin Maclaurin, Adam Smith, Tobias Smollett and James Watt has made Scottish intellectual and practical pre-eminence respected in England."

Here's tae us!

On Enlightenment

I have been subscribing to *Chronicles* for over three years, and I look forward to the enlightenment offered by each issue. I wish I had begun partaking of this wisdom long, long ago, but I suppose we have to be ready for something before we can reap the benefits of it. Every issue offers a new angle, a new insight, another author to search for, a new piece of history to dig into, another layer of the collected knowledge of our Western heritage.

Whenever *Chronicles* arrives, I experience that familiar feeling: Where have I been? Why wasn't I told/taught this? Was I just supposed to know it intuitively or by some kind of cultural osmosis? Quite a humbling experience, but humbling in the best way. *Chronicles* also aided the restoration (after 15 dark years of atheism) of my Christian faith. It is not easy to convey my gratitude for this.

Along with some back issues, I ordered an audiotape of Thomas Fleming's lecture on Sir Walter Scott from the Second Annual Summer School. What an eye-opening experience! I truly wish I were able to attend the Summer School or one of the seminars you present every year.

I hope you will continue to give recommendations about good books to study, as well as organizations whose activities you support. The Chesterton Society is one example. (I recently joined this group and am highly impressed with their work.) I wouldn't have found it if it weren't for *Chronicles*.

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The same goes for the League of the South. I joined this organization recently even though I have to admit to a tinge of guilt for not fully understanding what I am supporting. You see, I was always of the typical opinion regarding the South (I am sure you know what I mean), until I was made aware, through reading *Chronicles*, of how bigoted and horribly mistaken that line of thinking is. I have decided that this group deserves my support, if for no other reason than as a means of atonement for having been so prejudiced. The comments Thomas Fleming has made about the little cells around the country (in my case—the world) of people turning their backs on modern culture really hit home. Please continue to keep us informed about these worthy activities and literature, and please accept my heartfelt thanks for a gift that can hardly be repaid.

—Mike Ezzo
Yokkaichi, Japan

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

THE NAACP vows to campaign against every senator who voted to confirm John Ashcroft as attorney general. Oh, how we ought to hope so! Get out there, guys! Show us what dopes you're capable of being when you try hard!

Ideologues—e.g., the folk who run the NAACP these days—don't normally receive the attention they deserve. They deserve lots. Ideologues, for one thing, see life through a drinking straw: They want the rest of us to admire the same view.

If you salute or throw yourself prostrate on the ground in humble acquiescence to the NAACP's grand design, fine; if not, you're evil—wicked—racist (in the NAACP's grotesque formulation). Founded in 1909 to campaign for the equality of Negroes and whites, the NAACP today is an ideological money machine. That is, it exists seemingly for the purpose of scaring or outraging so thoroughly that Americans reach for their checkbooks, scrawl "NAACP" after "Pay to the Order of," drop this sacred communication in the mail, and thereby gladden the heart of NAACP President Kweisi Mfume, whose business it is—daily it seems—to invent new causes of fright and outrage.

Pretty unedifying. The NAACP itself has become unedifying in the extreme, about as much in tune with real life as the Anti-Saloon League.

Ashcroft as devil figure—even Ted Kennedy couldn't get away with that one, though he tried hard. The Ashcroft vote as "close to a litmus test" on civil rights—it staggers credulity. It likewise speaks volumes about the present quality of civic discourse, if you can call it "discourse."

Wherein did Ashcroft fail the NAACP? You know the answer. He voted against "hate crimes" legislation. As attorney general of Missouri, he argued against the use of state funds for a court-ordered school desegregation plan in St. Louis. He opposed affirmative action. He shot down Judge Ronnie White's nomination to the federal bench. He declined, given the chance in a *Southern Partisan* interview, to calumniate rather than salute Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson. He earned a grade of "F" overall on the NAACP's legislative report card.

And rightly so. "Hate crimes" laws enshrine the baseless liberal conviction that white male homophobes are gunning for the rest of the country. In the St. Louis case, Ashcroft tried to keep Missouri taxpayers at large from being dragged into one city's court-ordered plight. "Affirmative action" is a synonym for state-sponsored discrimination against—well, back to those white male homophobes. Ronnie White may not have been the worst judge nominated by Bill Clinton to the federal bench, but a number of his calls in favor of criminals were at the very least open to question. (Of course, it was fine for the NAACP to rant against Clarence Thomas!) What's wrong with Confederate officers who, if transported miraculously to the age of the Clintons, would likely pass out cold? "F" on the NAACP report card? Who, pray, seated Kweisi Mfume at the principal's desk?

Ah—he seated himself there, you say? Now you're catching on. The NAACP doesn't wait to be invited to judge our nation's deliberations; it jumps in and informs us how bad things are. (An unsavory habit shared by many on the left, from Kate Michelman's National Abortion and Reproductive Rights Action League to Ralph G. Neas' People for the American Way.)

What Sen. Cotton Ed Smith of South Carolina called "dewlapped effrontery" is a specialty of the American left. *You* shut up while *we* talk—that sort of thing. The effrontery of the NAACP attack on John Ashcroft is about as new as sideburns. The troubling aspect of it all is our tendency—the tendency of Americans in general—to let such folk get by with what they get by with. Failing to call the NAACP to account is an ingrained habit by now: partial payment, many seem to believe, for Our Country's Racial Sins (sniff, sniff).

That's why we should welcome an NAACP frontal attack on senators who voted for Ashcroft—Democrats included. What childish nonsense, this tactic. Anyone who has raised children knows about such nonsense, which flourishes when ignored and disappears when rebuked firmly. Childish ideologues—how's that for a governing class?

—William Murchison

MATTHEW SHEPARD, a young homosexual man murdered in Laramie, Wyoming, in October 1998, is the new "messiah" figure of one of the most evocative contemporary mythologies created by our ostensibly anti-religious rulers. As far as we can tell, Shepard seems to have been a quiet person who had the ill fortune to encounter a pair of deeply troubled lowlifes named Henderson and McKinney, who were in the midst of a methamphetamine-fueled crime spree. The lethal pair beat and robbed several other victims on the same night, regardless of sex or sexual preference, and they seem to have targeted Shepard more out of class hatred than homophobia: He just looked like a spoiled rich-kid student slumming in a working-class bar. Nevertheless, Shepard's murder attracted worldwide attention as an apparent manifestation of anti-gay violence, and he became the martyr *par excellence* of the movement against hate crimes and anti-homosexual discrimination.

From its earliest days, the Shepard case acquired religious overtones, largely because of the potent image of the victim's body being tied to a fence in a kind of crucifixion pose. The affair has since become a full-blown mythology, making me wish that I had been the one to coin the phrase "Matthew's Passion," which

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has been applied to subsequent retellings of the case.

Anyone wishing to understand the thoroughly religious nature of contemporary liberal ideologies could do no better than to watch *Anatomy of a Hate Crime*, MTV's recent dramatized reconstruction of the story, and the first of a wave of Shepard-related passion tales. Of course, Shepard is depicted as morally perfect, *sans peur et sans reproche*, and any suggestion of impurity or even sexual activity has been ruthlessly purged. Yes, he bought a drink for one of his assailants, but this was out of compassion for the poor rather than (as seems more likely) a misguided pickup attempt. But literally, in this tale, he goes beyond perfection to acquire all the characteristics of Christ. The tale begins and ends with Shepard narrating the events from beyond the grave, as he leads viewers to the fence that was his Calvary. He is no longer Matthew Shepard, but MATTHEW resurrected and glorified. By the way, all discussions about the case now refer to him simply as "Matthew": Messiahs need no surnames.

But if Matthew died for the sin and hatred of the world, who killed him? *Anatomy of a Hate Crime* is, if anything, even more interesting for its portrayal of the other characters in the story, whose moral roles are precisely determined by their sexual identities. Every female character in the story, bar none, is morally good, defined as pro-Matthew and pro-gay—even the consorts of the two killers. And if not actually his girlfriend, a female student is Matthew's best friend and his Mary Magdalene. All gay men in the film are also good and decent. Characters identify themselves as immediately and simplistically as in a 1930's B Western, where the bad guys always wore black and smoked.

So whom does that leave as the perpetrators of sin and hatred? A process of elimination leads us to heterosexual men, all of whom are depicted either as anti-gay bigots or thuggish police. It's not too much of a stretch to show Henderson and McKinney as villains, but the film literally depicts all straight men as sharing to some degree in their evil. The most ludicrous scene in the film has Shepard boldly challenging homophobic remarks by a professor in a French literature class. (As we all know, university humanities departments are notorious havens of white-male reaction.) After the murder, we see a bunch of good-ol'-boy lawyers boasting how easy it will be to get the accused acquitted on charges of killing just another queer.

Both scenes—with the professor and the lawyers—seem unnecessary, even tacked on, until we realize how exactly they fit into the messianic mythology. Christ/Matthew was crucified by specific individuals, but behind them stood all the evil forces of the world, who epitomize non-liberated heterosexual masculinity—conveniently and simply termed "hatred." Though Henderson and McKinney actually drove the nails, they could not have done so without the oppressive power structure of teachers, lawyers, and Pharisees. We are all guilty. We are all Pharisees. We have crucified the Lord of Glory.

—*Philip Jenkins*

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND's conspiracy against traditional morality reached new depths during December, when their magazine *Celebrate* announced their official poster child for teenage chastity: Louisiana pop-tart Britney Spears.

For those who do not own a television or subscribe to *People*, *Rolling Stone*, or *Christianity Today*, Miss Spears sells more records than any other female solo artist (she sold seven-million copies of *Oops . . . I Did It Again* in just seven weeks). The trouble (it would seem to some) is, she can't sing—very well. Why, then, is she so popular? Perhaps because none of her clothes fit.

Everyone but certain culturally savvy Christians seems to know that the only reason Britney rules the airwaves is that she constantly flaunts her "virginal" sexuality. *Mad TV* did a send up of her hit "Baby, One More Time" by changing all of her subtle lyrics ("Hit me, baby, one more time") to overt sexual ones, only to be followed up by Miss Spears parodying herself on *Saturday Night Live*, sporting an inflatable chest. *People* ran a cover article on Britney and other pop-Lolitas under the title, "Too Sexy Too Soon?"

The very month in which *Celebrate* ran its piece praising her as a "great ambassador for virginity," the British pop-culture rag *Sky* put her on its cover, praising her for her "Bad A--" image. The piece included pictures of her doing the L.A. club scene with the words "F--- You" emblazoned on the back of her skimpy tank top. *Sky* also reported that she forces her mother, Lynne, to wait outside lingerie shops on the streets of London while she buys sexy underwear, because "It's embarrassing."

Is the C of E oblivious to all of this? Did an unhip curmudgeon at *Celebrate* read her proclamations of inviolability and conclude, sight unseen, that if she be lifted up, she would draw all young girls and boys to her chaste lifestyle? On the contrary, the piece in *Celebrate* included a sexy photospread. "Britney is very sexy, but she has strong principles and religious views," they said.

Any serious Christian should feel uneasy when greeted with such statements (found on the church's official website, *www.cofe.anglican.org*) as "The Gospels provide little evidence that Jesus said much about sexuality in his teaching." In other words, get ready for a challenge to traditional morality. "Nevertheless," the C of E continues, "Christians have tended to be identified as people who have a great deal to say about sex—much of it very negative." (Time for Britney to set those nattering nabobs of negativism straight!) "By the 1920s, certain sections of the Church were beginning to develop a richer understanding of sexuality," which included the assertion that families should limit the number of children "in order to give children a better chance of success." During the 1930 Lambeth Conference, they officially christened contraception, stating that "the Conference agrees that other methods [of birth control besides abstinence] may be used, provided that this is done in the light of Christian principles."

This same "richer" understanding was applied to committed sodomites when a 1991 statement of the House of Bishops recognized that "Christians are divided in their view of homosexuality." The only direct statement was that "Christians must reject all forms of hatred of homosexual people." Of course, the "bishops emphasize again the need for further discussion."

This careful discussion has given us Britney Spears, and the message is obvious: Bend Scripture as far as you can in light of "tolerance" and "compassion," boldly defy two millennia of Christian teaching in light of a "richer understanding," and never, never be negative. Britney can become rich by strutting on stage in her underwear, bumping and grinding and singing, "O pretty baby, there's nothing that I wouldn't do," but she is (or, at least, claims to be) what teens used to call a "technical virgin." She truly is their paragon.

—*Aaron D. Wolf*

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"DR. KING was a strong and clear voice for freedom," declared President George W. Bush during a Martin Luther King, Jr., Day commemoration. His nominee for attorney general, John Ashcroft, proudly proclaimed during Senate testimony that, "By executive order, I made Missouri one of the first states to recognize Martin Luther King Day." These are strange words from self-described conservatives, even of the "compassionate" stripe.

Although the Supreme Court nullified congressional antidiscrimination measures in the Civil Rights Cases of 1883, the counterconstitutional phenomenon recrudesced in Titles II and VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The less-than-scrupulous Warren Court validated Title II through the Commerce Clause in *Heart of Atlanta Motel* v. *United States* and *Katzenbach* v. *McClung*. A nefarious nexus connects these provisions to such contemporary statutes as the Americans with Disabilities Act and the proposed Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would criminalize discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. They form a regulatory lattice that restricts federalism and proprietary discretion.

If one individual exemplifies the antidiscrimination apparatus, it is Martin Luther King, Jr. He extolled the student sit-ins that confused trespassing with the advance of justice and spearheaded the drive for Titles II and VII. King's anti-proprietary activism reached full bloom in the social-democratic rhetoric of his last years. His 1967 presidential address to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference contained such nonsense as: "[T]he kingdom of brotherhood is found neither in the thesis of communism nor the antithesis of capitalism but in a higher synthesis. It is found in a higher synthesis that combines the truths of both."

In 1953, Russell Kirk argued that the "Persuasion that freedom and property are inseparably connected" is one of the six canons of conservative thought—an affirmation that has fallen on hard times, given the philo-King sentiments of GOP leaders. (A video prologue to Bush's acceptance speech at the 2000 Republican Convention featured King.) An American right that countenances the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and related legislation is at best philosophically incoherent. At worst, it becomes complicit with leftist projects under the banner of "bipartisanship." The Ciceronian *malum turpe* that Paul Gottfried attributed to the American right in these pages ("Martin Luther King, Jr., as Conservative Hero," April 1997) has only intensified.

There is a scene in Mel Gibson's *Braveheart* in which William Wallace and his men are honored after defeating massive English forces at the Battle of Stirling Bridge. After the ceremony, bickering ensues over titles claimed by a Scottish nobleman. Wallace and his men begin to walk out. When asked by a nobleman what he intends to do next, Wallace replies that he plans to invade England. The nobleman laughs and exclaims, "Invade? It is impossible!" Wallace retorts, "Why? Why is that impossible? You're so concerned with squabbling for the scraps from Longshanks' table that you've missed your God-given right to something better." His words apply all too well to those conservatives who think their freedom lost unless they make obeisance to the party of His Majesty Lincoln—and now, the Rev. Dr. King.

—*Myles Kantor*

GEORGE W. BUSH is already under pressure not to "forget our global responsibilities." The usual suspects have taken their cue from a January 3 *Washington Times* article by the paper's military correspondent, Bill Gertz, who is notorious for obtaining and publishing classified information. Gertz, citing a Defense Intelligence Agency report from last summer, claimed that Russia was "moving tactical nuclear weapons into a military base in Eastern Europe for the first time since the Cold War ended" in "an apparent effort to step up military pressure on the expanded NATO alliance." Gertz called the alleged "movement" of "battlefield" nukes—"tactical" warheads used on artillery shells, short-range missiles, cruise missiles, and torpedoes—the fulfillment of Russian "threats" to respond to NATO expansion.

Gertz's article prompted official Russian denials and set off a wave of Russophobic internationalist blather at Imperium Central, otherwise known as "our nation's capital." State Department spokesman Kenneth Bacon claimed that, if the Russians had moved the nukes into Kaliningrad (a Russian enclave on the Baltic Sea sandwiched between Poland and the Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia), it would "violate" a "pledge" to keep the Baltics "nuclear free." (What about the post-Cold War understanding between Russia and the West that NATO would not expand eastward?) On Capitol Hill, Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-NY), outgoing chairman of the House International Relations Committee, called the charges "an alarming development that threatens the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe." Gilman said the reports "underscore the need to promptly [*sic*] enlarge the NATO alliance to include" the Baltic states. The *Washington Times* followed up the Gertz charges with a January 4 editorial by Jessica Fugate of the Council on Foreign Relations. Fugate called on Bush to "push forward with the historic process of NATO enlargement" and argued that Russia must demonstrate that she is "genuinely willing" to "work with the West" to avoid being isolated.

Meanwhile, a Kremlin spokesman called the charges a provocation designed to justify further NATO expansion. In addition to the Baltic states, the NATOcrats are eyeballing Georgia, a future unified Rumania (reincorporating Moldova, including the Slavic—and pro-Russian—Dniester region), and Ukraine as potential NATO members, moves that would isolate Russia and stoke further fears of Western domination in this once-proud nation now threatened by Islamic insurgency in the South, the collapse of its industrial and technological infrastructure, demographic decline, and the refusal of Western creditors to write off Soviet debts. Many Kremlin watchers are claiming that a cabal of spies, military bureaucrats, and ex-KGB officers is already working up a "mobilization" plan for taking charge of the economy's "commanding heights" as a response to chaos and external threats.

The return of Russia as the "Evil Empire" would suit both the Kremlin military/security apparatus and Western globalists. "Humanitarian interventions" will likely not be enough to keep the NATO alliance together, especially now that the Europeans are seriously looking at creating their own defense forces. Meanwhile, Putin is considering deep military staff cuts and reductions in strategic arms that the Kremlin cannot afford anyway. What's a Russian military bureaucrat to do? The ball is now in Dubya's court.

—*Denis Petrov*

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AUBERON WAUGH, R.I.P. The death in January of the British journalist (and *Chronicles* contributor) occasioned a startling outpouring of grief. The *Daily Telegraph* of London weighed in with five pages, and that was just on the next day. Every one of Waugh's many admirers was permitted a remembrance—even in newspapers he had ridiculed, such as the *Observer* and the *Guardian*. The coverage was so effusive that Waugh's friends were embarrassed. His longtime editor Richard Ingrams pronounced it "fulsome," and novelist A.N. Wilson chided, "Gush, gush."

American coverage was more restrained. The *New York Times* printed a first-rate obituary, while the *Washington Post*'s was a disgrace. Waugh's passing went unnoted on the websites of the *American Spectator* and *National Review*, although he had contributed to both publications. Their neglect was understandable: Waugh had been a stalwart cold warrior, but after communism's collapse, he became an enemy of American cultural imperialism. He had kind words for Pat Buchanan, and—like all good people—was scathing in his denunciation of the war on Serbia.

Waugh's reputation in America, to the extent that he had one, was of a minor novelist who abandoned that profession when he realized he would always be a footnote to his great father, Evelyn Waugh. In Britain, however, he was more famous than his father had ever been. His novels are all fine, but he stopped writing them not only because he considered the rewards not equal to his efforts but because he believed (quite rightly) that the "humane, bourgeois culture" which had supported literature had disintegrated.

Waugh never wavered in his belief that journalism was an honorable profession. He was an exemplar of a type that has all but disappeared in America (and Canada) and is fast disappearing in Britain: the honest hack. He wrote what he believed, without fear or favor, and had no time for the prostitution known as "movement conservatism." One day, while driving a moped, he was so angered by a sign forbidding the consignment of dead animals to a reservoir that he attempted to run over a lizard so he could chuck it into the water. He fell off the moped into a reverie, which concluded in a statement of political philosophy: Parliament had been passing laws for 700 years and didn't need any more. Politicians, regardless of affiliation, were busybodies—or worse. He was disgusted by the encouragement the British government gave to the genocide perpetrated by the Nigerian federal government against secessionist Biafra. This led to his first independent campaign for Parliament; his second was an attempt to shame Liberal leader Jeremy Thorpe—formally accused of conspiring to murder a homosexual lover—into not running for reelection. (Thorpe lost; Waugh received 79 votes.)

Waugh pursued his vendetta against Thorpe in his *Spectator* column, from which his election manifesto was banned, and in his *Private Eye* column, which ran from 1972 to 1986. Here, Waugh created a new art form: In an ingenious (and largely successful) ploy to get around Britain's notorious libel laws, he told such dreadful lies—about himself and everyone from the Royal Family to Harold Wilson to the Pope—that it made one gasp and stretch one's eyes. He became one of the most feared men in Britain.

He was certainly the funniest. But he was also, as he said, "always joking and always serious." His *Private Eye* columns, published as *The Diaries of Auberon Waugh*, are as profound an analysis of British decline as Roger Scruton's. Like his father, however, he never repined—except, perhaps, about the Catholic Church. Unlike his father, he apostatized. A lapsed priest in his novel *A Bed of Flowers* declares, "When they announced that the Mass was no longer a sacrifice, it had become a meal, I realized that the institutional form of the Church had become an empty shell; if the Church survives, it survives in the individual consciousness only . . . I will never go through the mockery of a church service again." For years, Waugh was a follower of Archbishop Lefebvre; he then despaired. We can only speculate about the state of his soul at the hour of his death—a death he seemed not to fear. His funeral took place in an Anglican church, but a Catholic priest presided. Heaven would be an emptier paradise without him.

—Kevin Michael Grace

OBITER DICTA: The dawn of the third millennium marks *Chronicles*' 25th year of publication. To celebrate, we're releasing a special 60-page issue in July, reprinting the best articles from the past quarter-century. Destined to be a collector's item, this issue would also be an ideal way to introduce your friends and family to *Chronicles*. Between now and June 1, you can place advance orders for additional copies by contacting **Cindy Link** at (815) 964-5813 or Subscriptions@ChroniclesMagazine.org. Orders up to nine copies will be charged at cover price (shipping included); orders of ten or more copies will receive a 20 percent discount. Call for information on bulk rates (over 25).

The fifth and sixth lines from the end of "Democracy and the Art of Handloading" (*The Hundredth Meridian*, February) should of course read, " . . . row after row of pretty pointed missiles three-and-a-quarter inches long." The author regrets the error, as well as the implication that, in Wyoming, you can't get a man with a gun (or, anyway, a .270 cartridge).

The last two paragraphs, as well as the last third of the fifth paragraph from the end, of "Letter From Venice: The Pavlovian Sandwich" (*Correspondence*, February) should have been set as indented quotations. We regret the error and offer our apologies to Samuel Clemens, whose pen name was actually Mark Twain, not Andrei Navrozov.

Charles Edward Eaton, who lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, is our first poet this month. Mr. Eaton is the author of 15 collections of poetry (most recently, *The Jogger by the Sea*), four volumes of short stories, and a novel, *A Lady of Pleasure*. He is the recipient of the North Carolina Award for Literature, among other prizes. His autobiography, *The Man From Buena Vista*, will be published this year.

Our second poet this month is **John Nixon, Jr.**, a Bellaman Award winner from Fork Union, Virginia, who was coeditor of the *Lyric* for 16 years. His poetry has appeared in, among others, the *New Yorker*, *America*, *Christian Century*, the *New York Times*, and the *Georgia Review*.

Chronicles is illustrated this month by St. Petersburg native **Anatol Woolf**, who, since coming to America in 1987, has been a frequent contributing artist to *Chronicles*, as well as to the *Washington Post*, the *Washington Times*, *Policy Review*, *National Geographic Traveler*, *Legal Times*, and *Cricket*. Mr. Woolf works with a variety of materials, from watercolors to pencil to acrylic. Further samples of his work are available on his Web page: *www.netcom.com/~a.woolf/*.

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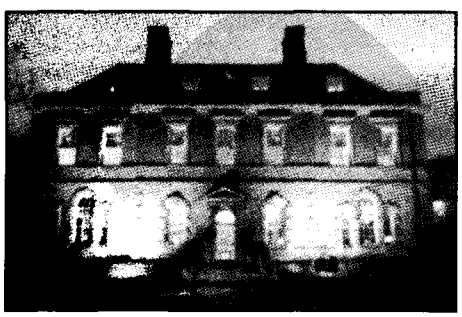

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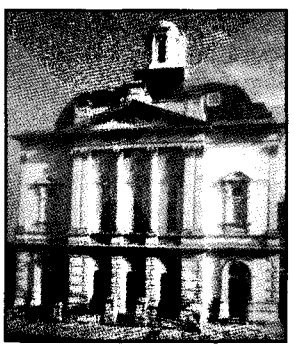

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Anatol Woolf

The Conspiracy of Conspiracies

by Thomas Fleming

The scene is Rome, about A.D. 300. The Augustus Maximian has returned to the ancient capital to oversee the construction of the lavish baths that will bear the name of the senior Augustus, Diocletian. Although Maximian is a rough customer from the Balkans and speaks a tough-guy Latin that sounds more like Rumanian than the language of Cicero, his limited brain does have room enough for one big idea: the grandeur of Rome that has been preserved by the pagan gods since the days of Romulus and the pious Numa. A better soldier than Diocletian, he has lived with death so long that fear is only a memory, and yet Maximian is afraid. He is afraid that his palefaced Caesar, Constantius, is soft on the one group that poses the gravest threat to Rome since the Gauls sacked the city in ancient times: the heretic sect of Jews who call themselves Christians—though if truth be told, there are more Romans and Greeks than Jews in that conspiracy these days.

A few years earlier, Maximian and the Caesar Galerius had talked Diocletian into cranking up the persecution of these nuisances. The meeting between Galerius and the Augustus had taken hours, but the young Constantius had been dragging his feet in Gaul, executing the worst troublemakers when he had to but showing little enthusiasm—much less initiative—for the task. Worse, there were rumors that his first wife (or concubine) was a convert to this unmanly, effeminate sect, and though Constantius had obediently put her away for Maximian's own daughter, there was something about Constantius that Maximian did not like. "Yeah," he had admitted to Diocletian, "he's a good soldier all right and makes an excellent administrator, but the man is too nice. He acts as if justice were something that could be weighed and measured like barley in the market and not a fat Dalmatian pig to be taken at swordpoint and carved up."

Constantius would not have posed a problem if Diocletian had not been talking about retiring and insisting that the two Augusti get out of the way at the same time, making this Christsymp Constantius not only Augustus, but senior Augustus.

Such a man was bound to relax the persecutions, perhaps even legalize this so-called church (or rather churches, since there were so many competing sects among these Christians that, if one got into power, it would be sure to persecute the other). Divided or not, these Christians had seemed to thrive on persecution, multiplying to the point that they might soon make up a fourth of the population. Given any encouragement, they might take over the whole empire, which—without the gods' protection—would be doomed. Imagine an army of Christians all expecting to enjoy peace on earth with Germans. As soon expect the lion to lie down with the lamb!

With a gloomy sense of foreboding, the emperor had convened a secret meeting to discuss the Christian threat. He had invited his son, **Maxentius**, whom he wanted to succeed him. The boy was lazy and a little wild, but he was more of a man than Constantius would ever be and infinitely preferable to that pretty-boy son of his, Constantine. He had also brought in the Caesar **Galerius**, who at least was very sound on the Christian issue, and for additional support he summoned some intellectual firepower. **Porphyry**, a student of Plotinus and the grand old man among the Platonists, had written a devastating work (in 15 books!) against the Christians. This was no cheap propaganda (at least that is what he had been told—Maximian was not much of a reader), but solid argument based on fact.

Iamblichus was Porphyry's student, but he had broken with his master on the subject of magic. Porphyry, like Plotinus, was a rigorous philosopher who despised the everyday gods as lower demons who demanded blood sacrifice. Iamblichus, by con-

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trast, believed in everything, especially the more exotic demons of Egypt and Syria. To tell the truth, Iamblichus was a bit of a nut, but his mishmash of Egyptian superstition and Greek philosophy appealed to the mob.

At the last minute, he invited an old-fashioned patrician, **Anicius Priscus**, expert in Etruscan augury. Priscus was a well-known snob, an expert on senatorial procedures—as if the senate had really mattered for a hundred years.

The meeting opened with an interminable prayer from Iamblichus, who invoked every god Maximian had ever heard of (and then some), culminating with "Oh gods of Egypt, look down with favor on your brothers Maximian and Galerius, you gods who expelled the impious Jews from your land which they had polluted with a plague of leprosy . . . " When it was finally over, Maximian got down to business. "You guys didn't tell nobody you were coming here, did ya? All right. Now listen. The Caesar here and me, we're very concerned about this Christian business. The most illustrious Galerius has been doing his part to eliminate this conspiracy, and don't think that the divine Diocletian and me aren't grateful. But even if the Caesar Constantius did his best to eradicate these pests, we'd still have a problem. They are like rats who can live on the poison we're feeding them. We need a really long-range plan, a solution to the problem that will be final. Let's hear first from the most noble and illustrious Caesar."

Galerius outlined his own thorough system of persecution and repression, concluding with the confident prediction that, with a little more help from Constantius and the rest of the boys, within ten years he would have burnt up all their books, torn down all their meetinghouses, and rooted out every last of these maggots and forced them to renounce or die.

"Hear! Hear!" chimed in Maxentius, nursing his hangover with a bottle of unwatered wine mixed with foul-smelling herbs. "But if you fail," the boy added shrewdly, "doesn't that mean we'll just have to learn to live with the problem?" Galerius assured him that would never happen.

Porphyry said nothing, but his expression suggested doubt. Pressed, he explained that ideas could not be rooted out so easily with fire and sword. "It's not as if Christians are completely wrong, after all. In their crude and primitive way, they are only talking about ideas that the divine Plato and Plotinus had discovered and worked out in detail. This Christ of theirs, as some of His own followers are saying, is only a name for the Mind of God that emanates from the One."

"Then what's the problem?" interjected Maxentius.

"The problem," continued the philosopher, "is that these idiots insist on claiming to be not only original but to have an exclusive grasp of the truth. Intellectually, they're babies, but with all their mumbo-jumbo, they can appeal to the uneducated masses who, even in these enlightened times, are in the majority. But truth, as they say, will out, and with a little help from the sacred purse, I could send out a squad of young philosophers who would totally discredit them."

"You, Iamblichus," asked the Augustus, "you agree with this, right? I mean, this guy is your teacher."

Iamblichus conceded that Porphyry had made an excellent beginning, but that, as always, he put too much faith in the power of reason. "New ages," he said, "require new methods," and although the Christians were undoubtedly a plague upon the empire, they did have the merit of seeing through the dull sterility of the official religion. "Of course, the soldiers have their Mithra, and some others are initiated into the mysteries either at Eleusis or somewhere else; but for most people, religion means simply going to this or that official ceremony and waiting for the free barbecue. Not exactly inspiring, is it?"

Pressed to offer an alternative, Iamblichus sketched out a rough plan for a new religion that would include the old rituals and gods but would also provide the mystery, magic, and excitement that his students knew how to create. They would need an organization, like the Christian one, and an official theology that could be put together from Iamblichus's own writings, which not only reflected the authentic traditions of Plato and Plotinus (Porphyry winced visibly), but also went back to the most ancient wisdom of the Egyptians who built the pyramids. "As a philosopher, I quite see the need for reason and science, but not the abstract science of Aristotle and Strato but the true science of Thoth and Isis that confers power. And frankly, it will give them an opportunity for sexual thrills that is sadly lacking in the enemy's religion."

Priscus, meanwhile, looking distracted, remained silent. Maximian, who could not have said who his father was, much less have produced an ancestral mask, could not stand the noble Roman type and consoled himself by remembering that he could have the jerk tortured to death at the end of the meeting. "So you, the patrician, you don't go along with this? What's the matter—you don't like getting advice from a Syrian, and maybe you don't like taking orders from an Illyrian Hunkey?"

"Lord, I would never presume even to form, much less to express an opinion, in the presence of the divine Hercules himself" (as Maximian was often represented).

These Anicii had been practicing the art of apple-polishing for 500 years. No wonder they were so good at it. Pressed to contribute his two dinars to the conversation, the aged senator explained that the days of his people and their gods had come and probably gone. "The temples in Rome are virtually deserted, except when there is food to be had, and the only gods the people love are divinities from Egypt or Persia or Syria. Neither the little Latin godlets of the fields and farms nor the majestic deities of the Capitol are revered. My family and a few others, like the Symmachi, we follow the old ways because they are old and they are ours. We wish these Christians would go away, but we wish them no harm. If their young god defeats our old ones, it is because he is kept strong on the wine of their faith. We, alas, have not faith enough to keep a fly alive."

"Well," interjected the emperor, "what about this plan for taking over their ideas and using them?"

"Sire, if I must speak plainly, I am against it. We Romans and Greeks are civilized people, and we despise the degenerate cults of these Oriental impostors. Porphyry is a good man in his own way, but this Iamblichus is no more a philosopher than you are—"

"What's that?" snapped Hercules-on-earth.

"—than you are an ordinary man, sire. If we must be displaced by these newcomers, then let us preserve our dignity and not get down into the same Eastern gutter with the followers of the Nazarene. Some of my grandchildren are already reading these scriptures of theirs and studying their books. Well, 'What's the harm?' I ask myself. After all, what difference, ultimately, does it make, if we offer sacrifices to Mary the Mother of Christus or to the Great Mother?

"If we can survive Mithra and the Unconquered Sun, we can survive Christus. And to tell the truth, I prefer the company of their bishops, who are sincerely mistaken, to these greasy frauds

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with their Egyptian fantasies . . . "

Within moments, Anicius was on the torturers' hooks as a suspected Christian, and Iamblichus's plan for setting up an official anti-Christian church was adopted unanimously by Maximian and Galerius, as it were, the two voting members of the committee. "But," Porphyry suggested delicately, "What if?"

"What if they do win? They have so far refused to be treated as one more mystery cult, and if they once get control, they will have to exterminate *our* religion, just as we have tried to exterminate theirs."

Iamblichus saw the point at once. "To prepare for that event, we must keep our plan a complete secret. Our little conspiracy will be a mystical brotherhood, handing down the hidden teachings from one generation to the next. When things get hot, we'll pretend to be the most Christian of Christians, and when things cool down again—as everything in the course of nature must—we'll be able to come out again in the open. In the meantime, what's to prevent us from infiltrating and taking over their entire conspiracy?"

Iamblichus's plot seemed a little loopy to the Balkans banditti who controlled the world, and, in the event, the divine emperors had enough to do in the next few years, fighting among themselves and, ultimately, against Constantius' son who eliminated both Galerius and Maxentius, the latter with the help of the Christians' God, Who sent him a vision. Encouraged, Constantine proceeded first to official toleration and then to active encouragement of the Church.

Iamblichus, however, was not discouraged, and he passed his secret plan down to his disciples, especially to Aedesius, who taught the secret to Maximus, who by good fortune became the mentor of Constantine's talented nephew, Julian. When Julian, by a stroke of luck, became emperor (just at the moment his cousin Constantius was about to annihilate his imperial pretensions), he was in a position to begin turning back the clock. To lessen the influence of Christians, he forbade them to teach pagan learning; he instituted an elaborate hierarchy of priesthoods, and spent so much of his free time in personally performing sacrifices that he was nicknamed the "slaughterer."

Unfortunately, old Priscus turned out to have been right. While there were riots and a fresh spate of mob actions and martyrdoms, pagans did not rally to the new religion. By now, most of them had Christian friends, and even those who hated the Church regarded the idealistic young emperor as a figure of fun.

Julian's death and disastrous campaign against the Parthians, though it was not foretold by his neopagan philosopher friends who egged him on, was predicted by the Sibylline books and by the Etruscan soothsayers he took with him. It was as if there were still a drop of truth in the old-time religion, that the gods were having one last laugh before they went to sleep, at the expense of the neopagans. All of Julian's work was rapidly dismantled in the succeeding reigns of Jovian and Valentinian, and in a little more than 100 years, Christianity was established and the old religions outlawed by Theodosius.

The underground conspiracy, however, went on. There were still educated pagans both in the Latin West and in the Greek East, and some of them were let in on the plot. Documents are scarce, but every few hundred years we get a glimpse into the conspiracy—Proclus, the late-fourth-century "philosopher" who openly carried on the project of contaminating Plato with pseudo-Orphic magical mysteries; Michael Psellus, the 11th-century Byzantine historian who alternated between deriding pagan myths and discovering in them "a deeper wisdom"—but, for the most part, we are in the dark.

The light, so to speak, begins to dawn in the 15th century, when the Greek Platonist George Gemistus Plethon arrives in Italy in 1439 with his friend Bessarion, as part of the Greek delegation to the Council of Florence. In Florence, he makes a big impression on a local gangster-politician named Cosimo de Medici, and Cosimo arranges a secret meeting to which he invites, in addition to both Plethon and Bessarion, several young Italian intellectuals, including Marsilio Ficino.

Both sides are very wary. The town is crawling with believers, and no one trusts Bessarion: Rumor has it that he is even prepared to sell out the Greeks to the Latins—imagine what he might do if he could get a price for all their heads! Still, Plethon has vouched for him, telling the gangster-banker: "He's not a real member of the movement I've told you about, but he is a sympathizer, a friendly companion on our great journey."

What went on in the meeting will be revealed at a later time, but the principal result was the formation of the famous Platonic Academy at Florence, whose members gathered up all the neoplatonist superstition they could find and disseminated it as the perennial wisdom of the ancients going back to the builders of the pyramids. Plethon lived to a ripe old age, dying before the Greek Church could give him the dismemberment which his openly pagan writings had invited. His friend Bessarion—now a cardinal in the Roman Church—sent a beautiful eulogy to the family, saying that if Plethon's belief in metempsychosis were correct, then he must have been the reincarnation of Plato and Plotinus. Plethon would now be enjoying eternity in the Elysian fields with his beloved Greek heroes.

Bessarion remained a good friend of Ficino, whom he addressed as "the Platonist" (as opposed, presumably, to a Christian). Cardinal Bessarion conducted himself as an orthodox Christian in public, but with Ficino he could afford to be more direct, and Ficino was bold enough to write Bessarion in 1469 that the darkness in which Plato's thoughts had been cloaked was dispelled—as earth is burnt out of gold—in the laboratory of Plotinus, Porphyry, Iamblichus, Proclus, and now of Bessarion, who has written "the" book on Plato. A significant list, to say the least.

Within a hundred years, the movement has grown far and wide and developed so many branches that it is impossible to keep track of them. "Platonism" and "Hellenism" become code words for an all-out attack on Aristotle, whose philosophy is identified with Christian orthodoxy. The Church itself is infected, and the misrule of Cosimo's great-grandson (Pope Leo X) helps to drive Luther into open rebellion.

By the early 18th century, some of the extremists form even more bizarre societies of "freemasons," using the nonsense in the Chaldean Oracles and in Hermes Trismegistus to claim a (nonexistent) Egyptian origin for their doctrines. In the 20th century, these theories will emerge in a new form under the guise of Afrocentrism, which merely changes the skin color of the pharaohs. In the meantime, a new nation had been created in the Atlantean West, whose leaders were all initiates into the lower levels of the mysteries. They laid out the capital of their New World according to the astrological theories of the Masters, and emblazoned on their most sacred object—a green piece of paper held in universal reverence—an image of the pyramid surmounted by the Great Eye.

Thou hast triumphed, O Syrian. c

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History as Paranoia

by Andrei Navrozov

There are many conservative, intelligent people who will happily tell you that there is no such thing as the absolute truth of history, only different, mutually complementary versions. History, they will say, is a mutable, fluid continuum, whose multiple truths are constantly undergoing revision and revaluation in one another's reflected light, as well as in the light of other, ever newer truths, ceaselessly emerging from darkness and oblivion. This is all very well, I say in reply, but what about the absolute lie of history? Surely there is such a thing.

To begin with a rather extreme example, there are those versions of history which I periodically read about in national news magazines in the wake of some big education survey: 64 percent of all urban 14-year-olds questioned believe Fidel Castro is president of the United States, every eighth 15-year-old in America imagines that *The Waste Land* was written by Minnie Mouse, half of all teenagers in Pennsylvania mark Brunei as "(D), a cathedral town in Shropshire" . . . Surely the historical falsehood contained in such statements, made out of nearly absolute ignorance, is for all intents and purposes absolute?

No doubt it is. Yet, laughable as these private untruths are, they are hardly more mendacious than the public untruths to which I, along with a billion others in China and elsewhere, was born just a few decades ago. "The Russian Revolution," "The Civil War," "The New Economic Policy," "The Collectivization of the Peasantry," "The Kirov Assassination and the Show Trials of the 1930's," "The Unprovoked German Invasion and the Great Patriotic War" . . . To these, with fresh hindsight, one may now add "The Twentieth Congress and the Great Thaw," "The Years of Stagnation," "The Gorbachev Revolution," and "The Collapse of the Soviet Union."

Andrei Navrozov is Chronicles' *European correspondent.*

The amazing fact about the text implicit in these textbook entries is not that it consisted of shameless lies dictated from above and instilled in young minds by a totalitarian regime intent on world domination. That, after all, is what totalitarian regimes sometimes like to do, just as public schools sometimes like to produce statistically significant proportions of the population who believe that Beria was the inventor of the lightbulb. No, a far more amazing fact is that the Western version of that text can now be shown to have consisted of as many lies, which were just as shameless, ever-shifting, and self-contradictory as the original totalitarian version.

Indeed, the two versions grew out of the same source, namely, the perfectly natural attraction of the individual interpreter of history to political power—especially unlimited political power—and to the blessings, material and otherwise, that he expected would accrue to him by way of reward, not necessarily earthly, for more or less toeing the line. When these individual liars, East and West, are viewed collectively, what one observes is a kind of magnetic field whose energies are distributed along a whole panoply of public and private channels, from university tenure to journalist accreditation, from peer pressure to clean conscience, from family tranquillity to professional perk. The cumulative result, in every case, is a nearly absolute conformity enshrining a brazen falsehood.

The study of the magnetic field of conformism is complicated by the inherently revisionist nature of the discipline. Since so much of the history written by liars is made up of their overturning of the history written by the liars who have come before them, the intellectual credibility of lying is perpetually, and effectively, renewed. Thus the historian who, many decades after Stalin is dead and buried, ridicules one of his scholarly precursors for disseminating Stalin's lies, thereby garners the credibility he needs to disseminate the lies of Khrushchev, and be-

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comes universally respected as a fiercely incorruptible truth-teller whose books get published simply because they are wonderful. Equally, the academic who exposes his predecessor's venal folly, such as his going to work with the Soviet archives under Brezhnev and being used by the Kremlin in the process, boosts his credibility before accepting Andropov's invitation to work with those same archives, or indeed in order to pen a cautiously optimistic, yet thoughtful and balanced, article about Gorbachev in *Foreign Affairs*.

I have not the space for names, and anyway to cite more than a few would likely upset the pose of emotional detachment which I am at pains to affect here. All I am asking the reader to bear in mind when it comes to the truth of history is that it is always easy to laugh at yesterday's conformism and the day before yesterday's lie while remaining solemnly serious with respect to the operative myths of the moment, whether these be global, such as "The Collapse of the Soviet Union" or local, such as "The Independence of the American Press." Yet it is these very myths that, in their turn, are certain to conceal the lies of the moment, lies that may be more blatant, more relevant, and more destructive than any of their laughable forerunners. Thus, those who now firmly believe that Khrushchev exposed Stalin, that Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn brought down Lenin, or that Walter Laqueur is a good guy while Walter Duranty was a bad guy are no less gullible and, ultimately, no less culpable in their naive conformity than those who, once upon a time, believed that the sun revolves around the Earth and that Oswald, a lone assassin, shot and killed Kennedy.

Aha, I hear the reader say, so he *is* a conspiracy nut, and all that talk about the truth of history is just a fancy variant of the usual barmy single-spacing: The Martians got my daughter pregnant, the telephone company is poisoning the wells, the Jews are all in it together. I can only reply that not every minority, dissident, or unorthodox view of history is *not* based on a lie just because it appears to run contrary to one or more of the established myths, and that, like the lowliest platitude-monger, the truth-seeker is obliged to make a case in support of his thesis if it is ever to be taken seriously by anyone other than a member of his own family.

For my part, I can think of no myth of modern history more pervasive than that of June 1941: Germany's treacherous invasion of the Soviet Union. If all the political lies of the 20th century have a central stem, it is the conception of World War II as a battle of good and evil that grew out of a mortal conflict between two wicked regimes, each represented by a wicked, and probably mentally unstable, mustachioed giant. That conception can be anatomized in the works of at least five generations of historians—beginning, perhaps, with the Nazi leaders *not* hanged at Nuremberg—all cribbing each other's notes, all eyeing one another's sources, all mouthing the same slogans, all bowing and scraping before power.

Their books number in the *tens of thousands*. Their articles, both scholarly and popular, are as the grains of sand in a curse of some bearded patriarch of the Pentateuch. Their television and radio programs, with all those gravelly voices and all that archival footage, are as much a part of our historical consciousness as . . . Since I cannot think of anything equally pervasive, I will have to repeat myself: as the view that the absolutely evil and supremely powerful Hitler attacked the just plain old bad and militarily unprepared Stalin, whereupon the absolutely good, democratic, and powerful alliance of the free world, led by Churchill and Roosevelt, brought down the more dangerous tyrant and cut the other down to size.

It was only ten years ago that there came along a man, writing under the pen name Viktor Suvorov, who began publishing books that challenged, and with time began to overturn, the established myth. In his earlier life, before his defection, Vladimir Rezun had been an officer in Soviet military intelligence, attached to an embassy and engaged in espionage. As a young man, a military-academy cadet, a tank commander, and then a special-forces ace, Rezun discovered the talent which he was later able to parlay into becoming the writer Suvorov: Apart from being blessed with the gift of photographic memory, he had an encyclopedic interest in weapons. As the information gathered by means of this faculty filled his brain, almost against his will he became an historian: Far too many technical specifications of far too many items of Soviet weaponry did not seem to square with what he had been taught in school about the uses to which these items were to have been put. Out of such rarified inconsistencies grew an unorthodox view of Soviet history; out of that secretly held view grew a heightened sense of personal responsibility and morality; out of that sense of responsibility came the decision to defect to the West and become a writer.

So far, so good, even taking into account that, after the publication in England of his earliest book, *Aquarium*, to the first death sentence on Suvorov's head already pronounced in Moscow (for defection) was added a second, thus making him the only spy alive to have been condemned to death twice. The British secret services were protecting him, and—more important—the new Kremlin leaders were suddenly eager to dissociate themselves from all those mad Bulgarians of yesteryear, running around London with poison umbrellas and shooting the first pope they see. But what Suvorov had not reckoned on, and only gradually began to realize, was that the orthodox Soviet view of World War II that he was now writing his monumental *Icebreaker* trilogy to debunk was also, with negligible variations, the orthodox Western view. The first volume of *Icebreaker* sold 800 copies in Britain, despite the insignia of a respectable publisher, Hamish Hamilton, and my own unrestrainedly complimentary review of the book in the *Times*. The second and third volumes—entitled, respectively, *Day M* and *The Last Republic*—did not sell at all, for the simple reason that no publisher was willing to touch them, despite the revelation that, when published in Russia as they now have been, Suvorov's masterwork achieved combined sales in excess of five million.

Working with the history of Stalin's and Hitler's armaments as an anthropologist works with the artifacts of a remote and forgotten culture, Suvorov has been able to show in his books that Stalin nurtured and eventually created Hitler in 1933 in order to invade Germany in the summer of 1941 and, following a *Blitzkrieg* to expropriate what would by then have been expropriated, to seize all of Europe, including Britain. Hence Stalin's code name for Hitler, *Icebreaker*. The military infrastructure built up by Stalin in the decade preceding the summer of 1941 was the most aggressive war machine ever assembled in the history of mankind, and it is only by reading Suvorov's highly technical account of its hitherto unimaginable true dimensions that a Western reader, nurtured on essentially the same propaganda as his Soviet counterpart, can appreciate the extent to which Barbarossa was an act of national suicide for Germany, an act later shown to have been consistent with the character of her leader.

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Any detailed review of Suvorov's argument is obviously beyond the scope of this article, nor is he my subject here. What I want the reader to consider, in the light of an argument that I personally regard as complete and irrefutable, are its political implications. If Hitler was Stalin's creature, were not Britain and the United States wrong to have weighed in on the side of the shrewder, not to mention more powerful, villain? If Hitler's act of national suicide made havoc of Stalin's master plan for the conquest of Europe, the dawn surprise of Barbarossa having preempted the Day M of the Russian invasion by perhaps as little as three weeks, should not Britain and the United States remember Hitler as a hero and a martyr? If Stalin was prepared for a war of aggression but not for a war of defense, while Hitler was prepared for neither kind of war and ended up having to fight both, does this not mean that the much vaunted might of Britain and the United States from 1941 to 1945, allied as it was to that of Russia, is just so much self-congratulation and self-aggrandizement? And if Stalin was able to conceal from both Britain and the United States his preparations for total war during the period of 1933 through 1941, and his preparedness for the planned war of aggression after 1939, what does that say about the likelihood of Western democracies understanding the Russia of today, or indeed surviving long enough to see a Russia of the future?

Yet there is one political implication that is more radical still, and it is one which is by far the most relevant to my subject. If more than 50 years since the outbreak of World War II could have passed without the argument, now made by Suvorov, having been made, and the questions which I am now asking—questions that, after all, disturb the very foundations of 20th-century historiography—having been asked, what chance has a smaller truth to survive and be heard in this cosmos of total, placid, conformist oblivion? Perhaps the Martians *did* get somebody's daughter pregnant, perhaps the telephone company *is* poisoning the wells, and the Jews may very well be *in it together*. Try telling that to the *New York Times*, my friends.

I personally believe that Skull and Bones, the Yale secret society, was the founding and organizing force of the Central Intelligence Agency, which began life in the basement of the Sterling Memorial Library on the university campus. I further believe that this secret society, which to date has produced three American presidents, has exercised a commanding influence over American foreign policy in the last century. I believe this was shown most dramatically during World War II—in the twin debacle of Teheran and Yalta—through the figure of the society's "Big Devil," Averell Harriman, a Soviet agent of influence since his first business visit to Russia in the 1920's. I believe that Harriman's prestige increased after the war, and that the Andropov-Gorbachev dismantling of the Communist Party and the subsequent reformation of Soviet totalitarianism occurred with the naive and irresponsible connivance of the CIA, intent on broadening the business-interests *Lebensraum* of its Skull and Bones keepers. And yes, unafraid to echo Oliver Stone, I believe that the Skull and Bones leadership of the CIA is responsible for the assassination of President Kennedy.

Well, something good about that bunch anyway, I hear the reader mutter. But the main question here is not whether this or that Kennedy deserved to die, nor whether Harriman and other "Wise Men" did what they did for love or for money, nor even whether—for the past 50 or 60 years—the American body politic has been worked like a puppet theater by a bunch of Yale milksops and ignoramuses, themselves manipulated from Moscow as carefully and farsightedly as Hitler once was. The main question is whether the absolute or nearly absolute lies of history can be manufactured, disseminated, and absorbed by entire nations without producing, by way of reaction, a deep-seated resentment on the part of those people who care even a little about history's truths, without caring if they are relative or absolute so long as they are not outright falsehoods. That reaction is called, by conformist opinion, *paranoia*. Those who have it are called *nuts*, while the truths they pursue are called *conspiracy theories*.

The main question, for me, is whether the writing of history—which, I repeat, has more to do with exposing confounded lies than with finding absolute truths shining like cities on hills—is ever possible *without* paranoia, albeit in this somewhat less than clinically accurate sense of the term. I do not think we can afford to wait another 50 years in order to hear this crucial question answered by history itself, for the simple reason that, as a paranoid conspiracy theorist, I believe that our time is running short. c

The Articulation

by Charles Edward Eaton

One keeps thinking of the overlooked and deep—
Cities not yet discovered, races never heard of,
Great causes, war, peace, ideologies gone to sleep.

A subway train with more passengers than it can hold
May be rumbling over graves, likewise packed,
Sunken pools, baths, mosaic floors inlaid with gold.

You walk at midnight on a lonely street,
The bars almost closed, the shades in the brothels drawn,
And think of suppurations, the number of ghosts that you
could meet.

A public drinking fountain poses as a little spout
Where thirsty gladiators drank, the concubines cooled
their lips—
Years from now, will that telephone booth, funereal, be
something to be talked about?

The pressing up and up forever, the pressing down of
years—
My body feels compact, set in place, volcanic:
There must be urns and urns below solidified with tears.

Therefore, the beauty of the mobile, the way the hand, the
foot can move—
A lady of the night, the last to leave the bar, knows vice but
not the vise:
How fabulous she is, drawing on a silken glove.

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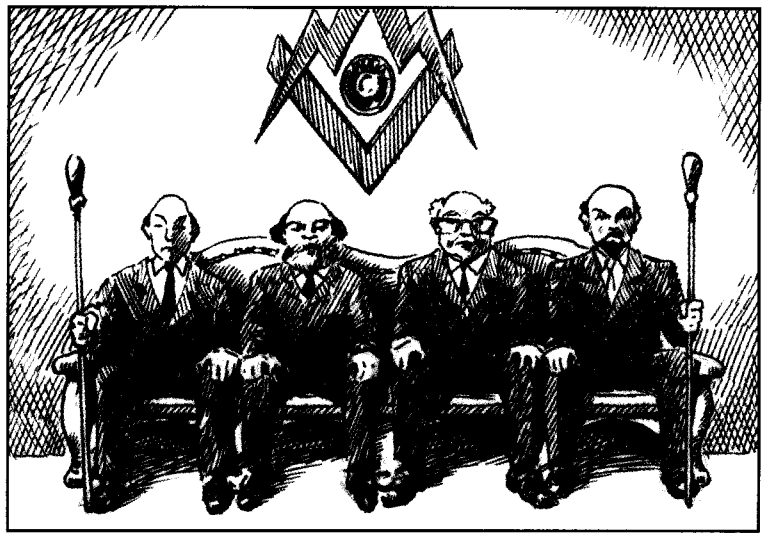
A Room With a View

Debunking the Whig Theory of History

by E. Michael Jones



Anatol Woolf

Once, before giving a speech in Cincinnati, I met the chairman of the history department at Xavier University. I told him that I was going to talk about the sexual revolution and how it had been used to destroy Catholic political power in the period following World War II (the thesis of Part III of my book *Libido Dominandi: Sexual Liberation and Political Control*). My rendition of this chain of events culminated in a description of a July 1965 conference at the Vatican between John D. Rockefeller III and Pope Paul VI. During this meeting, organized by the Rev. Theodore Hesburgh, then-president of the University of Notre Dame and a member of the board of directors of the Rockefeller Foundation, Mr. Rockefeller volunteered to write the Pope's encyclical on birth control (knowing, I suppose, what a busy man the Pope was). In a letter composed shortly after the meeting, Mr. Rockefeller said that the Pope and "his church" were no match for the tide of history, which would sweep away the Catholic Church if it did not get with the contraceptive propaganda campaign being organized by Mr. Rockefeller's Population Council.

The history department chairman's jaw dropped, and he finally gasped, "You mean it was guys in a room somewhere?" Yes, as a matter of fact, it was. I had just named the guys, and—since the Pope holds audiences in certain chambers set aside for that purpose—the room as well. The chairman, however, was having none of it. If this were true, he wanted to know, why had none of the distinguished historians at the University of Notre Dame brought it out in their writings? The answer was simple: Notre Dame had committed itself to a certain view of history, in which the Irish (as the paradigmatic Catholics) came to this country and found discrimination, which they overcame by dint of hard work and a benign cultural climate that rewarded industry, talent, etc.

The type of history generally practiced in academia is known as "whiggish" history, which regards history as the result of broad forces. Ultimately, the broadest forces take predictable forms, and so history becomes the triumph of freedom over oppression and of the light of scientific understanding over the darkness of religious (read: popish) obscurantist superstition. Combining both variations in his recent history of the sexual revolution, John Heidenry claims that, during the 1960's, "molecules of liberation coalesced."

I mention this incident to show not just the extent to which whiggish history is the regnant dogma in academia these days, but also the extremes to which this ideology can be taken. Like Darwinism in biology departments and Lysenkoism in the psychology departments of Soviet universities, it has become a condition of employment. Whiggery is, in effect, the English ideology. Even when it clearly was guys in a room somewhere—Alexandra Kollantai was in the room when the October Revolution was being plotted by people she said could have fit on one sofa—the standard explanation for everything is broad historical forces. Those who believe otherwise are writ-

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ten off as "conspiracy theorists."

There are two ways of dealing with the Whig position. The first is to reduce it to the absurd conclusion of the history professor from Cincinnati: Once we solve the problem of history, we are confronted by an architectural problem, namely, why people build all those rooms in all those buildings. The alternative is more realistic: Yes, there are people, and—yes—they do get together in rooms. In fact, the most powerful of those people often change the course of history by what they decide in those rooms. Lest anyone accuse us of battling straw men, let us confront the historical fact that the 18th century was known as the age of the secret society, and that the effects of one of those secret societies is with us still.

On May 1, 1776, Adam Weishaupt, a professor of canon law at the University of Ingolstadt in Bavaria, founded an organization he called the Club of the Perfectible. The name was later changed to the Order of the Bees, and changed again to that by which it is remembered today: the Order of the Illuminati.

The Illuminati might have remained the equivalent of a Bavarian fraternity house were it not for Weishaupt's fortuitous meeting with a northern German aristocrat of extraordinary organizational capability. In 1780, while attending meetings at the Frankfurt lodge *Zur Einigkeit*, Weishaupt met Adolph Freiherr von Knigge, who immediately fell under Weishaupt's spell. Knigge had joined a Masonic lodge of "strict observance" in Kassel in 1773, but—like many of his brother Masons—he was dissatisfied with the *status quo*, which involved elaborate rituals, constant bickering, and one group splitting off from another. In Weishaupt's Illuminati, Knigge saw an instrument that would bring order out of chaos and reform the increasingly fractious Masonic groups.

With the conclusion of the Thirty Years War, Germany had been divided up according to the religion of its princes. Knigge, who became a member of the Illuminati on July 5, 1778, gave Weishaupt's essentially Catholic and Bavarian organization access to the Protestant principalities in northern Germany; as a result, membership took off, jumping to 500 men throughout Germany. But the numbers tell only half of the story. Knigge added to Weishaupt's following of university students by attracting aristocrats and influential bureaucrats and thinkers from across Germany, using existing Masonic lodges as a source of recruits.

A crucial event in this regard was the Wilhelmsbad Congress, a Masonic convention held near Hanau from July 16 to September 1, 1782. Upon returning from the congress, Henry de Virieu told a friend: "The whole business is more serious than you think. The plot has so carefully been hatched that it's practically impossible for the Church and the Monarchy to escape."

The idea would fail, however, because of strife within the Illuminati. Ironically, the Illuminist system of control led to the break. Knigge's success in recruiting new members made Weishaupt feel that he was being superseded by his subordinate, leading him to increase his control, which generated strife with Knigge, who felt that he was being treated badly. According to Knigge's account, Spartacus (Weishaupt's Illuminist code name) abused and tyrannized his subordinates and intended "to subjugate mankind to a more malicious yoke than that conceived by the Jesuits."

On July 1, 1784, the Illuminati issued an official expulsion order against Knigge. The purging of Knigge, whose organizational and recruiting abilities had brought the Illuminati to a membership of around 2,000, came at an especially bad time. One week before, on June 22, the Bavarian government had issued its first edict forbidding membership in secret societies. Other edicts would follow on March 2, 1785, and on August 16. On January 2, 1785, the prince-bishop of Eichstaett demanded that the prince of Bavaria purge all Illuminati from the University of Ingolstadt. In spite of the secret membership rolls, Weishaupt was a prime suspect because of the radical Enlightenment books he had ordered for the university library. He was removed from his chair of canon law on February 11, 1784.

Over the next year, the hue and cry against secret societies increased dramatically. Rather than wait for his dismissal to develop into criminal prosecution or a hefty fine, Weishaupt fled from Ingolstadt to the neighboring Protestant free city of Regensburg on February 2, 1785. When the Bavarian government demanded his extradition and put out a reward for his capture, Weishaupt fled to the Protestant duchy of Gotha, where he and his family found protection under fellow Illuminatus Duke Ernst II.

If the Bavarian authorities had left it at that, the Illuminati would probably have remained a minor footnote in a very small book. But, in June 1785, certain important papers were found among the effects of Jakob Lanz, a secular priest and Illuminatus who had been struck dead by a lightning bolt. These papers testified to the Illuminati's intention to subvert the Masonic lodges. In October 1786 and May 1787, more papers were discovered when the house of Illuminatus Franz Xaver Zwack was searched after he had been demoted from his position at the court council and sent to Landshut. These papers, which constituted an internal history of the organization, proved the conspiratorial nature of the secret society beyond a doubt. The Bavarian government made a fateful decision: They published what they had found and, thus, assured Weishaupt and his conspirators an influence they never could have achieved on their own. The first batch of documents was published on October 12, 1786, igniting a furor that would last for years.

From the time Voltaire became enamored of Newtonian physics during his visit to England in the 1720's, Enlightenment thinkers had aspired to create a replacement for the Christian social order based on "scientific" principles. "Mankind," wrote Baron D'Holbach in his influential treatise *The System of Nature*, "are unhappy, in proportion as they are deluded by imaginary systems of theology."

As the initial Illuminist documents began to be published, Weishaupt's revolutionary intent became clear. In his 1782 speech, "*Anrede an die neuaufzunehmenden Illuminatos dirigentes*," Weishaupt provided his enemies with clear evidence that his secret society was intent on toppling throne and altar throughout Europe. Rossberg called the speech the "heart of Illuminism," while Leopold Alois Hoffman, one of the leading lights in the counterrevolutionary movement, felt that he could trace the "entire French revolution and its most salient events" back to the maxims of the *Anrede*.

But the significance of Illuminism did not lie in its exhortation to topple throne and altar. Rather—and this is what the conservative readership found most disturbing—Illuminism seemed to propose an especially effective system to bring about those ends. Weishaupt had developed a system of control based on disciplined cells that would do the bidding of their revolutionary masters—often, it seemed, without the slightest inkling that they were being ordered to do so. This system was effective

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precisely because it repudiated the crude materialism of most well-known Enlightenment thinkers. In his treatise "Pythagoras or the consideration of a secret art of ruling both world and government," Weishaupt proposed his system as the only possible way to implement the imperatives of the Enlightenment. "Is there any greater art," he wrote,

> than uniting independently thinking men from the four corners of the earth, from various classes, and religions with no impediment to their freedom of thought, and in spite of their various opinions and passions into one permanently united band of men, to infuse them with ardor and to make them so receptive that the greatest distances mean nothing so that they are equal in their subordination, so that the many will act as one and from their own initiative, from their own conviction, something that no external compulsion could force them to do?

Weishaupt's system was based on the organization that was considered the antithesis of the Enlightenment: The Jesuits. As Abbe Augusin Barruel would put it in his monumental antirevolutionary *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism*, the Illuminati were a cross between the Jesuits and the Freemasons, in which all of the controls placed on spiritual direction by the Church were lifted and whose goal was not to get souls into heaven but to create a paradise on earth. Illuminism was a machine that stripped the *esprit de corps* of the Jesuit order of all its superstitious accretions and allowed that mechanism to be used to achieve Enlightenment ends. This is precisely what the conservative reaction saw in the Illuminati, and it scared them.

"Anyone who remembers the artificial machine of the former Jesuits," wrote an indignant writer in the conservative-reactionary journal *Eudaemonia* in 1796, "will not find it difficult to rediscover this same machine under another name and with another motive in the Illuminati. The former Jesuits were driven by superstition, and the Illuminati of the present are driven by their unbelief, but the goal of both is the same, the order's universal domination of all of mankind."

It was not the goal of world domination that the public found so upsetting; it was the means whereby the Illuminati was attempting to achieve that goal. Weishaupt took the ideas of examination of conscience and sacramental confession from the Jesuits and, after purging them of their religious elements, turned them into a system of intelligence gathering in which members were trained to spy on each other and inform their superiors. Weishaupt introduced what he called the *Quibus Licet* notebooks, through which the adept bared his soul for the inspection of his superiors. The *Quibus Licet* books, Weishaupt said, were "identical to what the Jesuits call confession," and he told Zwack that he "borrowed the idea from the Jesuit sodalities, where each month you went over your *bona opera* in private."

The adept sent these monthly reports to the provincial under the title of *Quibus Licet*, to the provincial under the title *Soli*, and to the general of the entire order under the title *Primo*. Only the superiors and the general knew the details discussed therein, because these letters were transmitted to and fro among the minor superiors.

We can see in the *Quibus Licet* the vague outline of the system of spying which would become part of the communist system of control, both of the underground cells before they took over a country and as part of the police state erected after they had seized power. But the Illuminist system went deeper than that. Weishaupt created a technique that came to be called "*Seelenspionage*," or "spying on the soul," whereby the superiors in the Illuminati could gain an understanding of the adept's soul through close analysis of seemingly random gestures, expressions, or words that betrayed the adept's true feelings. "From the comparisons of all these characteristics," Knigge wrote, "even those which seem the smallest and least significant, one can draw conclusions which have enormous significance for knowledge of human beings, and gradually draw out of that a reliable semiotics of the soul."

As part of the systemization of this semiotics, Weishaupt—not unlike Alfred Kinsey 150 years later—developed a chart and a code to document the psychic histories of the various members of the Illuminist cells. In his book on the Illuminati, van Duelmen reprints the case history of Franz Xaver Zwack. In it, we see a combination of Kinsey-style sexual history, a Stasi file, and a modern credit rating. The superiors in the Illuminati could learn from its neat columns where the adept was born, his physical characteristics, his aptitudes, his friends, and his reading material, as well as his code name and when he was inducted into the order. Under the heading "Morals, character, religion, conscientiousness," we learn that Zwack had a "soft heart" and that he was "difficult to deal with on days when he was melancholy." Under "Principal Passions," we read that Zwack suffered from "pride, and a craving for honors," but that he was also "honest but choleric with a tendency to be secretive as well as speaking of his own perfection." For those who want to know how to control Zwack, Massenhausen (code name: Ajax) says that he got the best results by couching all of his communications with Zwack in a mysterious tone.

When the Illuminist manuscripts were published, the educated public was appalled by these sinister delvings into the most intimate recesses of the soul, but they were also fascinated by the opportunities for control that these discoveries opened. Wieland saw in the Illuminati the basis for pedagogical and political reform—which was, of course, the way Weishaupt saw things, too. His goal was the creation of a social order consistent with both Enlightenment science and the notion of emancipation from princes. "The truly enlightened man," Weishaupt wrote, "has no need of a master." Man will be well governed only when "he is no longer in need of government."

The Enlightenment appeal to liberty invariably led to the suppression of religion, which led to the suppression of morals, which led to social chaos. Thus, those who espoused Enlightenment ideals also had to be interested in mechanisms of social control. Freedom followed by draconian control became the dialectic of all revolutions; in this regard, the sexual revolution was no exception. In fact, "revolution" and "sexual revolution" were, if not synonymous, certainly contemporaneous. Once the passions were liberated from obedience to traditional moral law as explicated by Christianity, they would have to be subjected to a more stringent form of control in order to keep society from falling apart—something the French Revolution would make obvious. The chaos stemming from the French Revolution, in fact, inspired Auguste Comte to create the "science" of sociology, which was both an ersatz religion and a way of bringing order out of chaos in a world where men no longer found the religious foundation of morals plausible.

Weishaupt's system of control proved effective in the absence of religious sanction, and it became the model of every secular control mechanism of both the left and the right for the next

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200 years. Weishaupt was wise enough to see that "reason" of the sort proposed by the Masonic lodges of strict observance would never bring about social order. As the chaos in those lodges proved, reason often led to conflicting ideas about which program to follow. The Illuminist system took the law into its own hands and molded its members' behavior as its leaders saw fit. As in the case of Comte's sociology, the old Church was replaced with a new one. The old order, based on nature and tradition and revelation, was replaced by a new totalitarian order based on the will of those in power. The breakup of the Illuminati and the defection of Knigge, who found the emerging order more intolerable than the one he was trying to destroy, showed that this new order was not without its problems, but faith in ever-more-effective technologies of control, based on newer technologies of communication, would push this disillusionment further and further into the future.

The Illuminati were a concrete manifestation of Francis Bacon's dictum that knowledge is power. In this instance, knowledge of the inner life of the adept translates into power over him. Extrapolated to a state functioning according to Illuminist principles, this knowledge translated into political power. In the control of these *Maschinenmenschen*, both Weishaupt and Knigge caught sight of a machine-state that could create order through invisible control of its citizens.

While Weishaupt and Knigge failed to implement that vision, the publication of their papers ensured that others would at least entertain its ultimate fulfillment. Once released into the intellectual ether, the vision of machine people in a machine state controlled by Jesuit-like scientific rulers captured the imagination of generations to come, either as utopia (in the thinking of such people as Auguste Comte) or dystopia (in, for example, the work of Aldous Huxley and Fritz Lang, whose film *Metropolis* seemed to be Weishaupt's vision come to life). Like Gramsci, Weishaupt proposed a cultural revolution instead of a political one. He wanted to "surround the mighty of this earth" with a legion of men who would run his schools, churches, academies, bookstores, and governments—in short, a cadre of revolutionaries who would influence every instance of political and social power and educate the society to Enlightenment ideas. Van Duelmen notices the connection between the cultural revolution which Weishaupt proposed and the "march through the institutions" which the 68ers brought about less than 200 years later. The rise of communism obscured the fact that, for the first hundred years or so following the French Revolution, Illuminism was synonymous with revolution, both in theory and in practice.

Like so many who would come after him, Weishaupt sought to create a technology of control to take the place of self-control, which he lacked. At least part of the outrage which surrounded the publication of the Illuminist manuscripts arose from the disparity between the morality which Weishaupt preached and the depravity of his actions. Weishaupt had an affair with his sister-in-law; when she became pregnant, he tried to cover up his involvement by procuring an abortion. This behavior led Prince Karl Theodore of Bavaria to denounce Weishaupt as a "villain, perpetrator of incest, child murderer, seducer of the people, and leader of a conspiracy which endangered both religion and the state." The prince was right in seeing Weishaupt as representing the antithesis of the Christian state. The essence of this antithesis was the idea of control, the desire to dominate rather than serve, which St. Augustine termed "*libido dominandi*." If Christianity held loving service as its ideal, its revolutionary antithesis could only be domination. The most effective means to achieve that domination would be worked out in detail over the next 200 years. Weishaupt, however, made a significant first step by defining the terms. The battle for liberation would be both semantic and a battle for control of the soul; control would remain the essence of revolutionary practice, no matter how much the term "freedom" was used to justify its opposite.

Any objective analysis of the social engineering that has been the hallmark of American culture—from the "melting pot pageants" of World War I through Alan Dershowitz waving the bloody underwear of the sexual revolution in his defense of President Clinton—would have to conclude that Adam Weishaupt succeeded beyond his wildest dreams in creating a system of control based on the manipulation of human passion. Everything from Watson's behaviorism to advertising to sex education to pornography on the internet is part of that system, and it is all justified by appealing to the Whig idea of freedom. The real purpose is control, but it was all the work of human hands and, therefore, of people in rooms somewhere. Those who used social engineering during this century to overthrow the political order in this country and to destabilize the moral order upon which it was based were conspirators, and the essence of their conspiracy—controlling people through the manipulation of their passions—goes back to the grand conspiracy conceived by Adam Weishaupt.

When St. Augustine wrote the *City of God* at the dawn of the Christian era and the end of classical antiquity, he joined the notion of freedom then regnant among the ancients with the new notion of moral probity expressed in Christianity. "A man," he wrote, "has as many masters as he has vices." For roughly 1,300 years, that sentence was taken as a warning. In the context of the Enlightenment, however, it could also be seen as a recipe for political control, which is precisely how it was implemented. St. Augustine delineated the two options: the City of God, which is based on love of God to the extinction of self; and the City of Man, which is based on love of self even to the point of desiring the extinction of God. If the City of God is based on love and service, the City of Man is based on their opposite, namely, *libido dominandi*, the desire to dominate one's fellow man for personal benefit. Once the Enlightenment decreed war on Christianity, the program of *libido dominandi* became inevitable. No one has to conspire to get people to act on their baser passions, but that does not change the fact that a conspiracy *did* form to bring about that end. It is with us still.

Most people know this intuitively, even though—left to their own devices—they will come up with a cockamamie theory of the sort proposed by Veronica Leuken, the phony "seer" of the phony Bayside, New York, apparition, who informed the credulous that all of the disconcerting changes in the Catholic Church over the past 35 years were traceable to the fact that the real Pope Paul VI had been kidnapped and an impostor (look at his ears) had been placed on the Chair of Peter. While Veronica Leuken's explanation of everything may be wacko, it is not as wacko as the anti-conspiracy theories of people such as the professor from Cincinnati. It reminds me a bit of the man who, when he had evolution explained to him, opined that it was easier to believe in God. When it comes to history, it is easier to believe that it was people in a room somewhere.

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Cui Bono?

Conspiracy Theories: A Rothbardian Perspective

by Justin Raimondo

Anatol Woolf

During the debate over our unnaturally extended presidential election, David Corn, associate editor of the *Nation*, appeared on CNN's *Crossfire* and took up the cudgel in defense of Gore and his fellow coup-plotters. The smarmy Corn parried his opponent's contention that Al Gore and the Democrats were trying to steal the election with a gleeful cry: "You don't expect me to believe this conspiracy theory, now, do you?" A smile slithered across Corn's face, and his eyes lit up with the certainty that he had backed his Republican opponent into a corner: The argument, as far as he was concerned, was over. After all, who could possibly believe that the power-lusting Gore and his army of lawyers would want to seize power by using the judiciary to bypass the Constitution?

Corn's triumphant smirk was largely due to the bad press conspiracy theories have received over the years. Conservatives have been tarred with this particular brush ever since the early 1960's, resulting from the nationally orchestrated hysteria over the alleged "threat" of "right-wing extremism" (represented by the John Birch Society). Back in those days, you only had to "come out," so to speak, as a conservative, and you would be interrogated. The first question inevitably was: "So, you think President Eisenhower was a communist, eh?" Since the early 1950's, at least, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith has been trying to tar conservatives as either practicing or incipient antisemites—adherents to a conspiracy theory so obviously debased and irrational that it discredits every element of their worldview. Once, all that was required to dismiss an idea or person out of hand was an arch of the eyebrow and a reference to the "black-helicopter crowd."

But the tide is turning. In the perfervid political atmosphere of the present day—after the open conspiracy of Al Gore and his fellow bonapartists to seize the White House on the strength of a few thousand dimpled chads—that is no longer enough. The smug complacency of David Corn and his ilk, who sneer at the very idea that Prince Albert planned to seize the crown and place it on his own head, has thoroughly debunked the anti-conspiracy theorists, who were similarly disoriented by Watergate and the Vietnam War, when the whole course of American domestic and foreign policy seemed to be one dark and evil conspiracy against common sense and human decency.

Many conspiracy theories are, of course, absurd or even evil; but this can hardly mean that they all should be dismissed or denounced as hate crimes. Every organized effort, from a political campaign to an attempted *coup d'etat*, can, in some sense, be called a conspiracy, depending on who is making the call. The term is subjective, infinitely elastic, and ultimately meaningless when applied to anything short of a criminal cabal. Human beings act (often in concert) to advance their own interests—in politics and in life. Who can deny it?

This is, perhaps, less obvious when the differences between the left and the ostensible right are narrowed down to microscopic arguments over prescription-drug policy. In such a case, there are no longer any white hats or black hats in Washington, D.C., or San Francisco—only the grey centrism of the mushy middle. It follows, then, that there are no conspiracies, since practically everyone is neither good nor bad but a morally neutral technician firmly grasping the levers of power. In our era of bipartisan bliss and ideological convergence, when the prefix "neo" is attached—like a "for sale" sign—to all of the old ide-

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ologies, we are expected to believe that the actions of politicians and parties are undertaken for the good of the country rather than the vulgar self-interest of the participants. No ordinary person believes this (especially these days), but this civic conceit is still ritually invoked by the three major interest groups supported by the state: big business, big labor, and big media. Of these, the third is most vital in keeping the present order together, for it is the job of the intellectuals to confer legitimacy on those who rule, introducing what the Marxists used to call "false consciousness" among the producing classes. Their role is to lull the producers to sleep—how else could the tax-eating classes feast without interruption?—and convince them that they never had it so good. I include in this group not just the kept pundits and journalists but also an academic wing: the court historians, the economic planners, the various and sundry theoreticians and hagiographers of power whose every utterance justifies the actions of the state and glorifies the ruling elite at its helm.

In *Toward a Theory of Libertarian Social Change*, an unpublished book dealing with the strategy and tactics of the movement for a free society, the late Murray N. Rothbard defined the two great opposing classes by citing John C. Calhoun's "happy distinction between 'net taxpayers' and the 'net tax-consumers' who constitute the State and its privileged and subsidized allies." From a libertarian perspective, these are the bad guys—the leaders of the "tax-eating coalition"—while the good guys are their taxpaying victims. "In different times and places," Rothbard writes, "who constitutes the ruling elite will vary from group to group: ranging from Chinese emperors to Rockefeller and Morgan to Communist parties. Who the ruling class may be at any given time depends on an empirical analysis of the concrete conditions of the real world." This libertarian class analysis, which originated with the 18th-century French theorists of *laissez-faire* and was developed by Rothbard, is a prism that enables us to distinguish our friends—the great Middle American producing classes—from the enemies of liberty. Unfortunately, the good guys have never been good at this game, as Rothbard points out:

> Contemporary libertarians and classical liberals have been battling the ruling class under a severe self-imposed handicap: a stubborn refusal to identify the specific members of the ruling class—in contemporary America a coalition led by certain big-business groups allied to technocratic intellectuals and union leaders.

Contemporary conservatives are open to the same charge. They spent the decades of the Cold War denying the existence of a ruling class in Washington and concentrating on the alleged threat from the competing gang in the Kremlin. Faced with the bloated arrogance and increasing lawlessness of their own ruling elite—made more apparent and ominous since the fall of the Berlin Wall—the American right is just beginning to distinguish friend and foe. The problem, at least in part, is precisely the contempt that the mandarins and intellectual gatekeepers—the David Corns of this world and their right-leaning equivalents—have for "conspiracy theories." Too many on the right live in fear of this disdain. But perhaps an even bigger problem, avers Rothbard, is "that many libertarians believe that statism has grown purely as the result of intellectual error, or imbibing erroneous ideas about what set of governmental policies will further the general welfare." What we are facing, however, is not just "a tyranny in the service of abstract ideas," but "a massive system of economic exploitation of the productive many by the parasitic ruling few." Such people are not about to be "educated" and convinced to give up their thieving, rapacious, and (all too often) murderous ways. Rothbard argues that "statism is in the rational self-interest of the exploiters." Cartels, government employees, unions, subsidized oligarchs—all these state dependents have a material and emotional stake in legitimizing and expanding state power.

> The bold revisionism that so suited Rothbard's temperament was backed by solid research, buttressed by his encyclopedic knowledge of diverse fields, and anchored in references to an astonishing range of works.

Of course, such a worldview is bound to be dismissed as "merely an exercise in 'the conspiracy theory of history,' 'paranoia,' 'economic determinism,' and even 'Marxism,'" writes Rothbard—in spite of the similar methodology employed by Adam Smith, Ricardo, James Mill, Cobden, and Bright. Only modern opponents of big government have fallen into the trap of refusing, out of some peculiar squeamishness, to identify their oppressors. No wonder they are losing. Indeed, opines Rothbard, the only way to win is to name names, to expose continually the beneficiaries and supporters of the system as being one and the same. This is neither paranoia nor Marxism but "simply common sense." Rothbard cites the example of a quota on steel imports, arguing that "only a moron would deny that the domestic steel industry . . . was the major lobbyist pushing for its passage." If so, he asked, "why not extend this sensible analysis still further to more complex measures?" Foreign aid, the Federal Reserve, U.S. entry into two world wars—in all cases, we must ask, *cui bono*? Who benefits?

"Follow the money"—in the Clinton era, this old adage took on new meaning. Conspiracy theories—involving everything from the mysterious deaths that haunted the Clinton White House to the alleged purchase of U.S. government secrets by Chinese communists—flourished during the eight insufferable years of the most corrupt administration since the 1800's, and with good reason. Not since the Medicis and the Borgias had so much intrigue swirled around a ruling house and roiled its attendant institutions and satellites. Once decidedly "out," conspiracy theories were back in—and not only on the right. When the Clintonistas blamed most (if not all) of their troubles on what the First Lady characterized as a "vast right-wing conspiracy," a taboo was broken. What was new about the Clintons was not that they schemed, manipulated, and—yes—conspired to fill their coffers and sate their lust for power, but that they did it so carelessly and brazenly, as if they thought they could "spin" their way out of anything. How appropriate that this whole era

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should culminate in Al Gore's beerhall *putsch*.

Employing the terminology of the Austrian School of economics (elaborated by Ludwig von Mises, his teacher and mentor), Rothbard put it this way:

> The "conspiracy theorist," at his best, is simply a person who possesses basic praxeological insight: that men act, that they choose means in order to obtain certain preferred ends. The opponents of the "conspiracy theory of history" explicitly assume that all events in history are random, that they are never the results of human purpose and choice.

Of course, it is necessary to establish some relationship between the beneficiaries of a government action and those who originated and lobbied for its passage. This is a step—the careful gathering and correlation of empirical evidence—that too many conspiracy theorists skip, giving the rest of us a bad name. They merely identify the beneficiaries of a particular governmental policy and assume—or invent—the facts to fit their theory.

Rothbard never fell into this error. In his historical and economic writings that touch on this subject—for example, *The Case Against the Fed*, the four-volume *Conceived in Liberty*, the two-volume *Austrian Perspective on the History of Economic Thought*, and *Wall Street, Banks, and American Foreign Policy*—he practiced what he preached. The bold revisionism that so suited his temperament was backed by solid research, buttressed by his encyclopedic knowledge of diverse fields, and anchored in references to an astonishing range of works. Rothbard's books and articles were densely packed with pure fact: His footnotes alone are a veritable treasure trove for the inquisitive student. Yet, with all this information at his fingertips, he never became mired in the details of his subject but always saw the larger patterns, the overview that few had the originality, the daring, or the skill to uncover.

Rothbard's perspective on history and current events was summed up in his paean to historian and polymath Harry Elmer Barnes. Barnes, in his day, was the dean of the revisionist school that throws doubt on the "official" histories of two world wars. In his tribute, Rothbard explained that the rise of the garrison state and the threat of annihilation on an unprecedented scale was made possible by the power elites of the various states:

> These consist of the full-time members and rulers of the State apparati, as well as those groups in society (e.g. arms contractors, labor union leaders) who benefit from the military and warfare systems. In particular, this reversion [to barbarism] has been made possible by the reappearance on a large scale of the "Court Intellectual"—the intellectual who spins the apologia for the new dispensation in return for wealth, power, and prestige at the hands of the State and its allied "Establishment."

Of his old friend, Professor Barnes, Rothbard wrote that, "when the records are in and the accounts are drawn, it will never be said of him that he was a Court Intellectual. Absolute fearlessness, absolute honesty, absolute independence have been his guiding stars." In writing those words, he might also have written his own epitaph. c

The Difference A Day Makes

by Charles Edward Eaton

The day lily bloomed and died
As if on a single day
It said all it had to say—
How many ways, words, of any living thing
abide?

It opens in the morning, takes a breath,
Speaks forthrightly of its yellow glamor.
There is no fuss or undue clamor
About brevity in time, life-in-death.

So is the lily more astute?—
We speak on and on until late evening
About joy, anger, anger, joy, and grieving:
Next day, the flower is simply shriveled, mute.

You cannot stop your full, loquacious mouth—
In just one ordinary week,
You could fill a book with what you speak
As if you feel that language may be facing drouth.

I know it takes such trouble, and much more, to cope
with time—
Still, you look, and give a final look
As if you wished to press the flower in a book
Just before it dies, unconcerned about the solitary
and sublime.

But on toward night I thought I saw the lily quiver
As it released its last fine careless rapture—
And you and I are left to talk on and on, and capture
The secrets in the flower's corpse, the closed and cabalistic
segments of forever.

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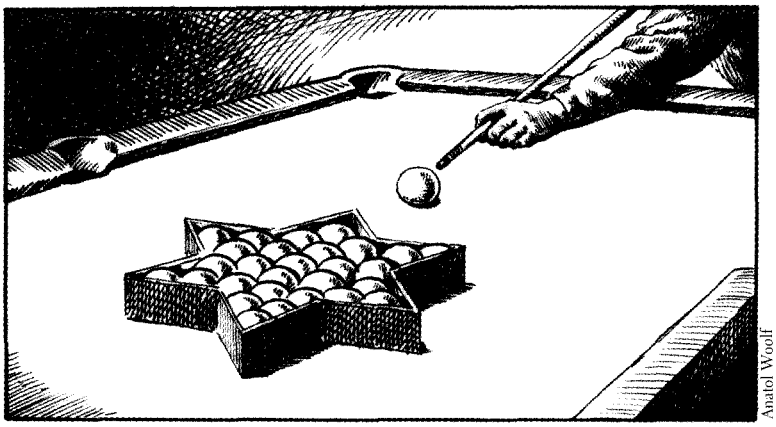
The International Jewish Conspiracy

by Paul Gottfried



Anatol Woolf

Any conversation about conspiracy theories inevitably turns to "the Jews." On one hand, the critics of "international Zionism" claim that U.S. foreign policy (or the world's resources) are being devoted to promoting Israel's interests; on the other, there are those who warn against an "international Jewish conspiracy." The second group can be traced at least as far back as the mid-19th century. Ranging from relatively reasonable social commentators to conspiratorial nuts, members of this group sometimes hallucinate about the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, an agglutinative text that owes much of its present form to the czarist secret police of the early 20th century. Making its way through France, Austria, and finally the United States, this steadily embellished narrative eventually entered the Middle East as an anti-Israeli document.

Behind the setting of the *Protocols* (in which Jewish dignitaries assemble in a Prague cemetery to discuss plans to take over the world) is a less bizarre belief: Jews are clannish as well as resourceful, and this combination of traits may make them appear a unified force determined to conquer the gentile world. Despite exaggerations, psychologist Kevin MacDonald makes this argument in his books. MacDonald's view of coordinated Jewish efforts does not require the existence of a Jewish state. It assumes a conscious, collective attempt by Jews in high places to acquire or expand power on behalf of their group—sometimes to the detriment of gentiles.

Until recently, however, Jewish infighting in the United States was far more intense than anything Jews suffered at the hands of WASP patricians. Dislike between German Jews and *Ostjuden* in New York could fill tomes of sociopsychological studies. A common Jewish explanation for why there was not more done to help Eastern European Jews escape the holocaust is that snooty German Jews in the United States blocked the entry of other, less socially acceptable Jews.

Moreover, there is no indication that Jewish liberals in the media or at universities behave differently from their pseudo-Christian counterparts. At one point, Yale and Princeton both had Jewish heads, while Harvard was led by a Catholic president with a Jewish father. Still, these university presidents were selected not because of concerted Jewish efforts but because the old WASP establishment looked favorably upon them, and because they may have exerted themselves a bit harder to climb up the greasy pole of professional success. There seems to be no central Jewish control responsible for the rise of Jewish liberal academics and mediacrats to eminence. And whatever obnoxious ideology Jewish liberals spread, others in the United States, Canada, and Europe would happily promote it in their absence.

Zionists, in contrast to other Jews, focus their attention on building and supporting a Jewish state—and on trying to convince Jews (other than themselves) to settle there. This movement arose in the late 19th century in Central and Eastern Europe. Despite some reservations among Eastern European rabbinic leaders and the expected opposition of assimilated German Jews in Germany and the United States, the Zionists embraced what turned out to be a winning cause. But Zionists did not invent Jewish nationalism; it was there all along, even if it took the Zionists to give that sentiment a political expression.

Since the creation of Israel in 1948, this political expression has been easy to recognize, both outside the Jewish homeland and within it. Represented in the United States by such advocates as the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), Zionist activists have sometimes aroused anger through their intimidating tactics. They have targeted politi-

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cians thought to be friendly to Arab interests and helped to defeat two Illinois members of Congress, Charles Percy and Paul Findley, for championing negotiations between the Israelis and the PLO. Even more shamelessly, AIPAC has exploited misplaced American Christian guilt over the holocaust when lobbying for U.S. military support for Israel. If the source had not been a right-wing journalist, many Jews on the left would have agreed with Pat Buchanan's description of how the "branding iron of anti-Semitism" has been wielded.

But the best days for AIPAC and other American Zionist groups may be in the past. In recent years, Jewish liberals have attacked Zionist intransigence for denying the injustices committed against the Palestinians. Although the *New Republic* continues to follow old party lines, *Moment*, *Tikkun*, and other American Jewish magazines both favor the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and proclaim the justice of Palestinian demands for statehood. They argue—with some justification—that it is dishonest for Jewish liberals to champion other victims of Western imperialism while slighting Arab minorities expelled by Jewish settlers. These second thoughts have surfaced alongside efforts within Israel to rethink the Zionist origins of that country. Partly influenced by a growing recognition that Arabs were living in Israel when European Jews arrived, this reassessment reflects other considerations as well: Israelis would rather Israel be a normal nation-state inhabited by their own nationality than a Middle Eastern extension of world Jewry or a colony of Miami-Dade County.

While the idea of a worldwide Zionist conspiracy seems less and less believable, the older conspiratorial view about concerted Jewish malevolence may be making inroads again. This is traceable, perhaps, to the form that Jewish separatism is taking. While, as Peter Novick shows in *The Holocaust in American Life*, there is a continuing obsession among American (and, even more, European) Jews with the holocaust, the set of interests attached to that obsession continues to change. Well into the 1980's, that preoccupation was connected to support for Israel and was used to make Christians feel responsible for the relatives of people they had supposedly victimized. Once intermarriage became common, holocaustomania also provided a pseudospiritual link between Jewish agnostics and their gentile spouses reaching out to a persecuted minority.

All of this, however, soon developed into something more unpalatable, namely, the recasting of the holocaust as the ultimate symbol of evil in the present cultural wars. It came to represent the omega point toward which our "prejudiced" heritage would lead us unless politically correct managers and educators pointed us in the opposite direction. The national press and Jewish organizations argue that we are headed down the slippery slope toward the Third Reich unless we relentlessly crusade against homophobia, sexism, and Christian intolerance. The most shocking expression of it I have encountered was a recent display at the local Barnes and Noble, sponsored by B'nai B'rith and the National Gay and Lesbian Alliance. Next to *The Diary of Anne Frank* and other holocaust-related literature were *Heather Has Two Mommies* and further instructional studies produced by the advocates of "alternative lifestyles." This reading matter, explained the accompanying poster, was essential to the crusade "to end hate right now."

In fact, the holocaust's association with fashionable agendas has become so clear that even critics of this arrangement try not to notice, if only for digestive reasons. When Congressman Jerry Nadler of New York perceives the "whiff of fascism" among George W. Bush's supporters in Florida, when Alan Dershowitz tells us that homosexuals—like Jews—were exterminated under Hitler (as opposed to Poles, who were only "selectively murdered"), or when an elderly Jewish woman in Dade County compares the (presumably Republican) poll officials who put her in line to vote to the guards at Auschwitz, I try (usually to no avail) to ignore these predictable idiocies. Needless to say, gulags do not serve the same propagandistic function as Nazi death camps—that is, as metaphors for political incorrectness carried to an extreme. In France and Italy, under communist leadership, the political left has denied the historicity of communist atrocities, while backing the efforts of Jewish organizations to showcase the holocaust.

This highlighting of "fascist crimes" is tied to the punishment of "crimes of opinion" committed by presumed holocaust deniers and journalists who challenge multicultural immigration policies. Holocaust entrepreneurs have joined communist deputies to impose a steady diet of *la politique commémorative* upon the French people—official plaques and civic holidays that memorialize the deportation of Jews from France (most of them refugees from other countries) by the Vichy government. As noted by Eric Conan and Henri Rousso—two impeccably leftist French journalists who, nonetheless, fear that things may be getting out of hand—the *fêtes nationales* set up to commemorate the liberation of France from the Nazis have less and less to do with national heroism or national suffering and have become guilt trips laid on the French for what the Vichy government did—not as the government of an occupied country but as the representative of Catholic European society. Small wonder that the nationalist right in France risks criminal prosecution to complain about Jewish communist efforts to dishonor *la patrie*. While such callous acts did occur, the attempt to blame all non-leftist Frenchmen is both boorish and dishonest.

The alacrity shown by Jewish organizations that use the holocaust to promote political correctness and multiculturalism is not, as far as I can see, aimed at dominating gentile society. All Jewish liberals I have known believe that the United States and other Western countries are swarming with hostile Christians and that the Religious Right is as dangerous as the Nazi movement before Hitler came to power. Although I am not often on their side, I fully share the amazement of Norman Podhoretz and Elliott Abrams, who, after looking at the attitudes of American Jews regarding the prevalence of antisemitism in the country, wondered aloud whether they shared the same reality.

The Religious Right, a screed put out by the Anti-Defamation League in 1994, illustrates this mindset. Abe Foxman and the rest of his equally anxious executive committee think that the Religious Right's "assault on tolerance and pluralism" signals a widespread antisemitic and homophobic Christian culture. Pious Americans who favor prayers in public schools or crèches in public places or who try to place restrictions on abortion are not fellow Americans with whom the left has honest differences. These zealots are the forerunners of antisemitic theocracy and exemplify (note the originality of this characterization) the "paranoid style in American politics." One telltale proof of this style is the tactlessness of Christian "extremists" who compare abortion to Nazi inhumanities. Unlike gays, blacks, French Stalinists, and impatient geriatric Jewish liberal voters in southern Florida, opponents of abortion have no right to overuse holocaust analogies.

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"All the News Unfit to Print"

Signs of the Times

Vol. 3 No. 3 March 2001

The pro-Gore bias of the American media during the five weeks of post-election legal and political wrangling was as unsurprising as it was obvious. Most foreign media were even less restrained. On December 14, BBC commentator Brian Barron told British television viewers that George W. Bush's "mandate is all but invisible." Radio 4 network commentator James Naughtie asked one of his guests, "Do you think he is up to being president?"—the kind of question that would never have been asked about the winner in a British general election. The *Times* of London, usually restrained in its opinions, concluded that "The best thing going for the new President-elect is low public expectations."

In France, *Le Monde's* editorialist tartly remarked on December 15 that Bush triumphed "thanks only to a mix of statistical good luck and a legal battle barely won," while *Die Tageszeitung* of Berlin wrote that "Europe is holding its breath" because of Bush's supposed ignorance of foreign affairs.

Such views were echoed in Canada: The establishmentarian *Ottawa Citizen* (December 14) bewailed the decision "by the politicized Supreme Court" to hand the presidency to the "least qualified president in half a century," which it called "unwelcome news to not only the government of Jean Chretien, but to Canadians generally." Even the conservative *Halifax Herald* jumped on the bandwagon on December 14:

> He began this campaign as the affable George "Dubya" Bush. He ends it, somewhat ingloriously, as George "Dubious" Bush. The label first started to stick during the primaries when the governor of Texas demonstrated his questionable command of English and of the issues.

Britain's Channel 4 News repeatedly called Bush "the most inexperienced President in decades," and David Smith, its Washington correspondent, insisted that Bush is "Reaganesque in terms of personal limitations and lack of curiosity." A recurring theme was Bush's lack of frequent-flyer mileage, which supposedly demonstrates not only his ignorance of world affairs but a more profound intellectual stupor. The BBC's "diplomatic editor," Mark Urban, was undiplomatic in his outpouring of elitist scorn: "Dubya's world. The excitement of air travel. Meeting people, going to exotic places . . . Until now, 'abroad' has meant outside Texas for Bush the younger."

The BBC's Jon Snow dwelt on this theme night after night. Interviewing Laura Ingraham, he repeatedly asked the same question: "Bush has been to Mexico once and to China, otherwise he's never been anywhere. Is that a good recipe . . . " Ingraham finally snapped back: "You obviously just don't like George Bush. I mean, you don't like George Bush. Say it: you don't like Bush, you wish he wasn't President, and now you want to delegitimize him."

This was an isolated display of diversity: Pro-Gore American guests often outnumbered Bush sympathizers by three or four to one. European editors also resorted to presenting card-carrying Democrats as independent analysts. James Rubin, a regular guest on dozens of British radio and television programs, was always described as "a former State Department official." Uninitiated Brits might thus assume that he was a career civil servant rather than Madeleine Albright's political appointee. But Martin Woollacott, writing in the London *Guardian* on December 20, revealed an important reason *bien pensants* on both sides of the Atlantic dislike Bush: They fear that he'll abandon their cherished "humanitarian interventions" and bombings for human rights. Bush is dangerous, prone to "a romanticisation of the past and a misunderstanding of the present," Woollacott argued, and his leadership is "less a real policy than a shaky intellectual construct" that enables the new President to hope that others will grasp the necessity of his flawed policies:

> The Europeans, the United Nations and others will also quickly grasp that it is quite right that the US contribute neither money nor soldiers to humanitarian operations, since America makes its contribution to world security in so many other, more important, ways. The Europeans will understand, in time, that it is not the business of the 82nd Airborne Division to escort children to school in Kosovo, in Condoleezza Rice's well-known example, while it is perfectly reasonable to expect British or Italian troops to do so.

Switching from irony to reproach ("Would Clinton have dithered so much on the Balkans had he not been fearful of Republican attacks?"), Woollacott finds the "essence" of the "problem" with Bush in his alleged "worship of military strength allied to a deep disinclination to use it"—all of which "could make the next four years a dangerous time in the life of the world."

The Kosovo Albanians felt understandably dejected. As *Agence France Presse* reported from Pristina immediately after Gore's concession speech (December 14), they fear that Bush's victory "may cost them a vital ally in their struggle for independence." *Zeri*, an Albanian-language daily, warned on the same day that Powell and Rice are

> extremist conservatives who do not believe in America's interventionist foreign policy and are opposed to its participation in peacekeeping . . . With calls for the removal of US forces from Europe, the Albanian question could be left in the hands of European states traditionally closer to the Slavs.

In Israel, there was real consternation at the outcome. The *Jerusalem Post* (December 15) expressed Israeli concern about losing Bill Clinton, "a great friend of Israel," and gaining the son of George Bush, whose relationship with Israel was

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"rocky at best":

> The major wild card is whether the new U.S. Administration will attempt to proceed with the peace process in the mold of Oslo, or realize that the Oslo mold has been broken and a whole new concept is in order. The cornerstone of this new concept should be that it is not Israel's opposition to Palestinian statehood that is the obstacle to peace, but Palestinian (and Syrian) demands that even the most dovish government in Israel would consider reckless if not suicidal. If Bush tries to coast, and does not adapt to the new post-Camp David realities, both Israel and the region could be in for a rough ride.

In the Arab world, the mood was very different. As the Lebanese daily *Ad-Diyar* reported (December 15):

> Observers realize the extent of satisfaction Arab governments and media feel over the success of George W. Bush, because they originally feared the presence of a Jewish vice-president like Lieberman. . . . Arabs know that, traditionally, the Republican Party is not under the control of the Jewish lobby and believe that Bush Junior will follow his father's footsteps in the region. They also think that, as the new Secretary of State, Colin Powell would follow a realistic policy in the region, whether on the level of the Arab-Israeli struggle or what is related to security in the Gulf.

While Arabs rejoiced, media pundits all over the Western world were closer to the mood in Pristina and Tel Aviv—anguished at the defeat of Gore ("statesmanlike") and the victory of Bush ("insecure" and "inexperienced"). The BBC's Peter Marshall, reporting from Washington, described Gore's concession speech as "both gracious and finely tuned" while Bush's was merely "magnanimous" because "He had to be."

On one subject—unlimited Third World immigration—most Europeans refuse to follow the liberal lead from America. Jörg Haider's visit to Italy last December, ignored in America, revealed the depth of native Europeans' feeling about their threatened heritage and identity. As the *Corriere della Sera* reported,

> [Haider] said Italy was soft on immigration and he attacked the prime minister, Giuliano Amato, and President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi as weak men with weak, leftwing views. He said: "I want to advise them to calm down, because I speak the truth: everyone knows that in Italy there is a growing problem of immigration and, at this moment, a very nervous climate over the next election. I repeat what I believe: everyone has a right to a dignified existence, but in their own country. Ever more people are thinking like I do."

While Haider is invariably maligned in the United States for his "extremism," genuine extremists are let off the hook—if they perform on cue. A key ethnic Albanian leader in Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova, is invariably described as a "moderate" in the American press. In an exclusive interview with the high-circulation German magazine *Spiegel* (December 9), however, Rugova came across an unreconstructed hard-liner whose disdain for the Serbs is matched only by his arrogance towards the "international community."

> Responding to a question about President Vojislav Kostunica's offer of negotiations on the future of Kosovo, Rugova replied that such negotiations were "senseless and unnecessary" and that the only conceivable negotiations would be those at a fairly low level on the "normalization of relations" between independent states.

Rugova regards Kosovo's "independence" as non-negotiable, and he seems to believe that the rest of the world is unreservedly with him: "Nobody will ask the Serbs, nobody needs their agreement. They must accept the decision of the international community." Those Serbs who remain in Kosovo will continue to live in ghettos under KFOR protection, as their full freedom of movement cannot be guaranteed:

> In Rugova's opinion "NATO needs to stay for ever" in Kosovo, and for the sake of the entire region NATO bases should be established all over the Balkans. He concluded the interview with the statement that "NATO is our own private army."

Tens of thousands of Kosovo Albanians and other Muslims who live in New York may be forgiven for thinking that American public schools are their own private schools. As the *New York Post* reported on December 1 (http://www.nypost.com/news/17424.htm):

> Who says students can't pray in public school? The Board of Education allows Muslim students to worship in school buildings during the holy month of Ramadan . . . One Brooklyn high school gives Islamic students special privileges to be 15 minutes late for class and to turn the auditorium into a makeshift mosque for their daily prayer vigil—a practice one noted civil libertarian said might be illegal.

The *Post* noted that these accommodations for Muslim students came only weeks after Brooklyn Shallow Intermediate School in Bensonhurst painted over a playground mural dedicated to neighborhood youths who had died because it featured Jesus Christ. But at Lafayette High School, also in Bensonhurst, students can get a special pass to be late to seventh period so they can pray in the school auditorium.

> "The above named student will be participating in Ramadan every day through December 22, 2000. He will be approximately ten minutes late to his/her 7th period class," Lafayette Principal Kenneth Sinclair writes on the passes. "Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in this matter." . . . "The school lets us do our own prayer. It's beautiful," said Umit Kulug, a 17-year-old senior from Turkey. "They let 100 of us boys and girls pray together in a big auditorium. Some of the non-Islamic students get a pass to watch us pray." Kulug said teachers even help students catch up on what they missed in class.

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The Boringest Man in the World

by Samuel Francis

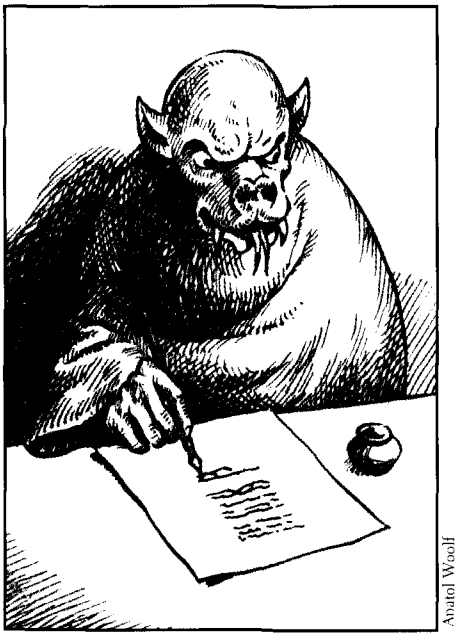
"Everything is good when it comes from the hands of the Almighty; everything degenerates in the hands of man."
—Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*

Do What Thou Wilt: A Life of Aleister Crowley
by Lawrence Sutin
New York: St. Martin's Press;
483 pp., $27.95

◆

Not the least of the ironies of the modern age is that the more it pretends to rationality, the more it wallows in the irrational. In the last generation, one of the trends in modern intellectual history has been the exposure of the irrationalist roots and affiliations of those periods and movements that boast most loudly of the triumph of their rationalism. The late Frances Yates' work on the importance of Hermetic and occultist traditions in the Renaissance and James Billington's exposure of the occultist linkages of the radical Enlightenment and European revolutionary movements are well-known instances. This scholarship shows that what is usually dismissed derisively as the "occult" not only survives in the modern mind but actually permeates it.

The latter half of the 19th century also witnessed an "occult revival" that—though it manifested itself in a number of secret societies modeled more or less along Masonic lines and claiming to possess secret knowledge of a mystical nature as well as, in some cases, the ability to perform magical operations—was actually a resurrection of Gnostic ideologies of antiquity. The occultism of the period was in part a reaction against the industrialization and urbanization of Western society, but it was also a continuation of the Romantic revolt against modernity itself—as well as a bizarre fulfillment of the promises of modernity.


Anatol Woolf

While most of the characters associated with the 19th-century occult revival are now mercifully and deservedly forgotten, by far the most significant of them—the bizarre and often pathetic figure of Aleister Crowley, who has retained a lurking and unsavory presence in some corners of 20th-century literature and in late 20th-century popular culture—has somehow escaped oblivion. Somerset Maugham wrote a novel about him, a number of writers of popular fiction have based sinister characters on him, and various rock music groups of the 1960's and 70's revived him as a kind of idol. Through his own Herculean efforts to cultivate notoriety during his lifetime, he has managed to survive as a supposed Satanist: the "Great Beast of Revelation," as he liked to be called, or "The Wickedest Man in the World," as the British tabloid press dubbed him in his heyday. Although Crowley has been a staple of many sensationalist books and occultist tracts, Lawrence Sutin's thorough biography is the first major and serious study of the Great Beast's life; if it proves anything, it shows that Crowley was much less the Great Beast than the Great Bore.

Born in 1875 to a wealthy middle-class family of fundamentalist Christian faith, Crowley rebelled against the rigorous religiosity of his upbringing and the Victorian primness of late 19th-century British society. He showed early promise as both a gifted chess player and an alpinist who scaled some of the most difficult mountains in the world; but while still an undergraduate at Cambridge, Crowley began to cultivate an interest in magic and mysticism as well as in poetry (not to mention debauchery in every conceivable form). Unfortunately, Mr. Sutin never offers much of a serious examination of Crowley's poetic talents and achievements; neither one probably amounted to much. Crowley's verse seems to have consisted mostly of florid and not very memorable imitations of the Pre-Raphaelite style that ceased to be fashionable during his youth; he despised the modernist poetry that flourished dur-

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ing most of his life in the early 20th century, and no modern poet seems to have paid any attention to him.

Crowley joined up with a secret group calling itself the "Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn," which has been the subject of far more romance and intrigue than it ever merited. The Golden Dawn did harbor some writers of note, including the young W.B. Yeats, and for a time also sported the actress Florence Farr, the mistress of Bernard Shaw, but mainly it was a sect of middle-class shopkeepers who fascinated themselves with the outlandish rituals and robes they affected. From the Golden Dawn, Crowley moved to a more mature preoccupation with Buddhism, where he might have remained had he not experienced what he took to be a supernatural visitation in Cairo in 1904. Exactly what happened is unclear (it was unclear to Crowley as well), but he claimed that a supernatural being named "Aiwass" had dictated to him a book destined to be the holy text of a new religion for a new era, or the "New Aeon," as Crowley began to call it. Devout Christians may regard "Aiwass" as a demonic or Satanic figure, while more secular minds would take him to be merely an hallucinatory phantasm of Crowley's own sex- and drug-besotted mind (next to—and perhaps even more than—magic and poetry, sex and drugs were his favorite obsessions). One way or the other, Crowley devoted much of the rest of his life to evangelizing on behalf of the new faith.

The religion itself he called "Thelema," after a Greek word for "will," and the basic commandment of the cult was "Do What Thou Wilt Shall be the Whole of the Law," both name and law being adapted from Rabelais. There are obvious libertarian and libertine interpretations of this creed, expounded by Crowley in the manuscript dictated by Aiwass and published as *The Book of the Law*, but there is also supposedly a magical meaning to it, although Mr. Sutin fails to explain this very clearly. (That may represent no failing on his part, however, since there may not be any meaning to it at all.) Crowley, who began affecting a shaven head to make himself look more sinister, did attract a number of followers, mainly lonely and vacuous women and foolish young men, both of whom became the objects of his voracious sexual exploitation. By the 1920's, virtually driven from England and France by his notoriety, he had established an "Abbey of Thelema" in Sicily where he and his band sodomized and flagellated each other to their heart's content until Mussolini's government got wind of them and booted the Great Beast out of the country. By the 1930's, having exhausted the fortune he had inherited and squandered whatever else he managed to get his hands on, Crowley found himself addicted to heroin and facing both poverty and obscurity as his followers abandoned him, his friends saw through him, and the yellow press tired of him. He finally died in 1947, the New Aeon of which he claimed to be the prophet as yet unnoticed by mankind.

For all the sensation he excited during his lifetime, Crowley's mind, his writings, and his life offer little interest. His notoriety was based mainly on his outspoken defiance of Victorian sexual and moral norms, which is one of the reasons anyone has paid any attention to him since his death. Yet those normal people who had much contact with Aleister Crowley regarded him as anything but heroic. In 1912, for example, Crowley and one of his female companions were cavorting in a villa outside Naples while his lover's teenage son lived with them for a summer. The son was the young Preston Sturges, later famous as the director of such film comedies as *Sullivan's Travels* and possessed of more real talent than Crowley could imagine. Sturges's assessment of the Great Beast was more devastating than any curse Crowley's magic could concoct:

> The practitioner and staunch defender of every form of vice historically known to man, generally accepted as one of the most depraved, vicious, and revolting humbugs who ever escaped from a nightmare or a lunatic asylum, universally despised and enthusiastically expelled from every country he ever tried to live in, Mr. Crowley nevertheless was considered by my mother to be not only the epitome of charm and good manners, but also the possessor of one of the very few genius-bathed brains she had been privileged to observe at work during her entire lifetime. Ask me not why! . . . Reading about some of his subsequent exploits, I realize that my mother and I were lucky to escape with our lives. If I had been a little older, he might not have escaped with his.

Sturges's characterization of Crowley is somewhat akin to that offered by American arts patron John Quinn, whom Crowley tried to impress. "Frankly," Quinn wrote to Yeats, "his 'magic' and astrology bored me beyond words. Whatever he may be, he has no personality. I am not interested in his morals or lack of morals. He may or may not be a good or profound or crooked student or practitioner of magic. To me, he is only a third- or fourth-rate poet." Yet another literary figure wrote that, "when you got used to his eccentricities, and so long as you were not impressed by his mystical pretensions, he was apt to become a fearful bore."

Why then is Aleister Crowley important enough to warrant serious attention at all, let alone a 400-page biography? His significance lies in the fascination he exercised over the entire century in which he flourished, from the mediocre novel that Maugham wrote about him to the attention splattered on him by the Beatles and Led Zeppelin and his adoption by the counterculture of the 1960's. The reason for that fascination lies not so much in any talents possessed by the tedious Great Beast as in his genuine ability to project and even incarnate some of the most characteristic features of the century itself. Crowley's New Aeon is nothing more than the illusion of modernity, the "New Age" that the last part of the 20th century and the first part of the current one chatters about so much, an age in which human beings have succeeded in "emancipating" themselves from the moral, religious, social, and political bonds of the old era and now imagine that they—or some of them—are about to become as gods because of their emancipation. Crowley believed human beings could transcend and escape their own nature through his synthesis of magic, sex, and drugs. He was not the last to believe so, though a more typical route to secular perfection has been political action. Yet, whichever path to liberation one chooses, the inevitable result is the same ruin and wreckage at the social level that Crowley inflicted on himself on the personal one. Someone should have explained to the Great Beast that his New Aeon was neither new nor true and that any era for which this pathetic charlatan is as fitting a symbol, as Crowley is of ours, is likely to wind up being as much of a failure, a fraud, and a bore as he himself turned out to be.

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No Place Like Home

by Randall Ivey

"If any man hunger, let him eat at home."
—1 Corinthians 11:34

Family Gathering
by Fred Chappell
Baton Rouge:
Louisiana State University Press;
72 pp., $22.50

Jayber Crow
by Wendell Berry
Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint Press;
384 pp., $25.00

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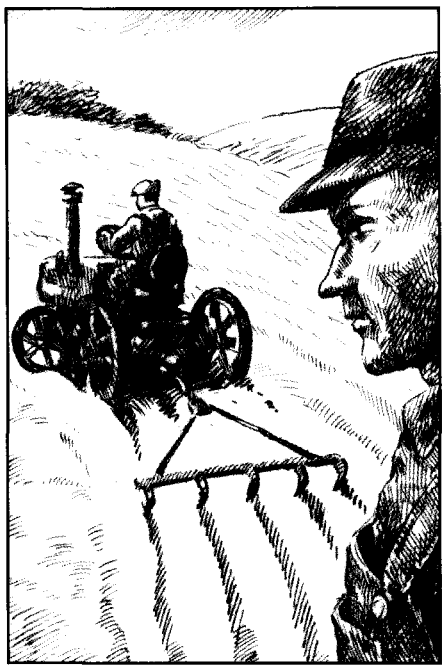
Anatol Woolf

Fred Chappell's *Family Gathering*, his first book of poems since 1995's *Spring Garden: New and Selected Work*, is a collection of short verse portraits that allows Chappell to display his considerable gifts for miniature (a talent also on display in his epigram collection C from 1993). There is no linear "plot" to this cycle nor a readily discernible "theme"; the book is a gallery of personages, a family, come together for an unnamed purpose. The subject is a familiar one for Chappell, and the command of his material is equalled by his display of formal dexterity. But aside from providing readers with the pleasure of watching a master craftsman at work, *Family Gathering* is a sad reminder that families today hardly ever *gather* anymore.

Family Gathering reminds us of a better time, although it is in no way an anachronistic work. The whole spectrum of human experience is here, from greed to goodness, from chastity to concupiscence, from youthful innocence to old age which has not necessarily attained wisdom. What family has not suffered the scourge of an Uncle Einar, a cigar-puffing hick who has made a little money in his lifetime and now feels it is his duty to tutor others in the inexhaustible glories of capitalism?

When Uncle Einar lets his intellect soar,
His groundling kinfolk sit around and stare
As he sucks upon his velvety cigar
And expatiates upon his Cadillac car
Such sterling precepts from his wisdom pour
That every bromide glows like cinnabar
As he explains the profits of peace and war,
The economies of nations near and far,
And how to gain the peso, drachma, kroner, yen, dinar,
By knowing who you know and being who you are.
Yet livid thunderstorms around him roar
When he contemplates the multitudinous poor
Who seem to lack the slightest instinct for
Keeping the ravenous wolf outside their door.
But lest they spoil the pleasure of this hour,
Uncle Einar thrusts such thoughts afar
And pours a cognac from a Baccarat jar.

Or his resourceful wife Wilma, whose charm bracelet grows with ornaments each time Einar strays from the conjugal bed:

Your Uncle Einar and his shiny dome
Are more attractive than you realize
To certain types a little past their bloom:
His every misstep swells my menageries
With cunning little animals that shine
And jingle on my bracelet display,
Adding music to my old refrain:

Randall Ivey lives and writes in Union, South Carolina.

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Any time I catch you, you will pay.

Or the secretive, impenetrable Cousin Lilias (the family black sheep?), who

> Seems to move in time to a bell
> that tolls
> Beyond the careful measures of
> night and day,
> Her mind a prospect of indifferent
> skies.

Or Uncle Wallace, who, with sifter in hand, preaches the virtues of restraint in all things, corporeal and spiritual, and about whom the speaker says, "*Never did we hear / Such praise of moderation from a man so potted.*" In terms of religious belief, the family ranges from the "True Believer" ("Uncle Zack believes that we will thrive / By doing everything the Bible says. / *Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.* / Whatever happened to Aunt Inez?") to the "Nonbeliever" ("But Cousin Terry thinks Holy Writ / Holds no authority, not a whit, / Although to score a point, he'll quote a bit. / Oh, what a filthy hypocrite!").

In presenting these good country people, Chappell could easily have resorted to caricature or, worse, to the fashionable dysfunction that permeates all too many literary and dramatic works dealing with family relations today. He resists the temptation admirably; if, now and then, his skillful pen lapses into stereotype (as in his portrait of the bachelor Cousin Willoughby, who "owns an antique shop / And dreams of days when little boys / Were thought quite suitable erotic toys / For older men . . . "), then we should bear in mind that clichés *are* clichés because they hold some kernel of truth.

In *Jayber Crow* (the full title reads *The Life Story of Jayber Crow, Barber, Of the Port William Membership, As Written by Himself*), Wendell Berry also stages something of a family reunion. This is a culminating work, a summation of the themes Berry has been developing for more than 40 years now as a novelist, poet, and essayist. I would stop short of declaring it definitive or final, however, because Berry, while nearing 67, appears ever more fecund in these autumnal years of his life. Still, I get the sense that *Jayber Crow* is his grand pastoral symphony, his *magnum opus*. It is a profoundly beautiful book, simple in design and execution but intricate in its portrait of people and place.

It is about *membership* in a place, as the subtitle implies: in this case, Berry's fictional Port William, Kentucky, the setting of all of his short and extended fiction—his geographical "postage stamp," as Faulkner said of his own fictitious Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi. The novel cycle began in 1962 with *Nathan Coulter*, a gentle story of a boy's initiation into manhood and responsibility, and culminated in at least one masterpiece, *The Memory of Old Jack* in 1974; now, with *Jayber Crow*, possibly two. *Jayber Crow* reunites many of the characters from those earlier books, some of whom, such as the Coulters, make a major appearance in the story, while others, like Old Jack Ketchum, make only a brief appearance. Having Crow be Port William's resident barber is an ingenious way of allowing Jayber (a mispronunciation of the old Southern epithet "Jaybird") access to all the major and minor personages and all of the important events that occur in Port William during a 70-year span of the 20th century (from 1914 through 1986, when the book is set). In this way, Jayber becomes the town's "hovering bard," to use Andrew Lytle's classic phrase. In his memoir, he becomes its secretary, its recorder of deeds, its keeper of collective memory as well.

Jayber is no mere provincial, however, having tasted the wider world (as far at least as Frankfort, Kentucky, the state capitol). Orphaned at three by the early deaths of his parents, Jayber lives with elderly relatives until their demise. He spends time in the Good Shepherd, an orphanage, and later studies to become a minister until his own doubts thwart him and his instincts lead him back home. There, he plants himself to live out the rest of his days, any lingering wanderlust conquered. His homecoming is an occasion to unite past with present, the Port William he has left with that to which he has returned:

> I looked at everything and remembered it, and let my memories come back and take place . . . The child I had been came and made his motions, out and about and around . . . All my steps had made the place a world and made me at home in it, and then I had gone, just as Aunt Cordie and Uncle Othey had been at home and then had gone.

His epiphany continues:

> And like a shadow within a shadow, the time before my time came to me. I was old enough by then to know and believe that the old had once been young. Once Aunt Cordie had been Cordie Quail, a pretty girl. There had been a day when Uncle Othey and Aunt Cordie had come there, young, just married, to begin their life at the landing, to have their pleasures and to endure what had to be endured. There had been a time before they came, and a time before that. And always, from a time before anybody knew of time, the river had been there . . . And I saw how all a-piece it was, how never-ending—always coming, always there, always going.

Later, when he assumes the job of gravedigger in addition to his barbering duties, Jayber contemplates the dead in an absolutely lovely passage recalling the close of Flannery O'Connor's "Revelation," in which Mrs. Turpin stares into the night sky and sees the proper order of heaven's multitudes making its way upward on a starry bridge:

> The people had lived their little passage of time in the world, had become what they became, and now could be changed only by forgiveness and mercy. The misled, the disappointed, the sinners of all the sins, the hopeful, the faithful, the loving, the doubtful, the desperate, the grieved and the comforted, the young and the old, the bad and the good—all, sufferers unto death, had lain down there together. Some were there who served the community better by dying than by living. Why I should have felt tender toward them all was not clear to me, but I did.

Like Chappell, Berry is too wise a man and too skillful a writer to lapse into cliché or stereotype. His Port William is no Agrarian Shangri-la, and its denizens are as susceptible to temptation and frustration as any city dweller because they are human. But there is a difference: The people of Port William have found their place in the world and are happy to submit to its natural order. This gives them an advantage as they live and struggle and fight and die to maintain that order. Who are their enemies? Some, such as Cecelia Overhold, a transplant to

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Port William and the town's self-appointed sophisticate, are flesh and blood. Having come to Port William in her superficial love for Roy Overhold, a native son, Cecelia proceeds to lord it over the townspeople with her own superior upbringing and "refined" tastes. "She did not like Port William pronunciation, diction, and grammar," Jayber explains. "She did not like its public loafing and spitting. She did not like its preoccupation with crops, livestock, food, hunting, fishing, and weather. She did not like its taste in church windows. And so on." Cecelia is afflicted with what Henry James once called a "mania for the huge and swelling." Her ideal town is Los Angeles, where her sister resides: "California, in Cecelia's mind, was the one Utopia of the world." Like every utopian, Cecelia has rigid ideas regarding the good life, and she perpetually attempts to implement those ideas on her fellow Port Williamites, whether they want them or not.

Other enemies lack a human face but are even more devastating in their effect: war, for instance, and mass mechanization. In one of the novel's most powerful chapters, "A Period of Darkness," Jayber summarizes the toll World War II takes on Port William, robbing it of its sons and brothers and nephews and leaving those behind in constant, silent dread of what they come to call the News—the confirmation that they have lost yet another of their young men.

> Port William . . . had not caused the war . . . Port William has to suffer what it did not make. I have pondered for years, and I can't connect Port William and war except by death and suffering. No more can I think of Port William and the United States in the same thought. A nation is an idea, and Port William is not. Maybe there is no live connection between a little place and a big idea. I think there is not.

The greatest champion of mechanized farming in Port William is Troy Chatham, an erstwhile sports hero and novice farmer who, unlike his father-in-law Athey Keith, has no reverence for the land he is working. According to Jayber, Troy "thought the land existed to serve and enlarge him." He shares Cecelia Overhold's love of the big, the fast, the efficient. He is among the first farmers in Port William to use mechanized labor and is a regular sight plowing soil with his new tractor while his father-in-law stands by in uncertain awe. Athey, on the other hand, is the "farm's farmer, but also its creature and belonging. He lived its life, and it lived his; he knew that, of the two lives, his was meant to be the smaller and the shorter." Athey takes the long view: He knows he is supposed to take from the land what he needs and no more; he knows it will be here long after he is gone but only in the shape he has left it. Unfortunately, Troy's view seems to be winning, while all men such as Athey and Jayber can do is stand by and watch the result emerging.

I do not mean to imply that *Jayber Crow* is a polemic garbed in fictional clothing. It is a full-fledged novel, pulsing with real people and events. Its heart is the exquisite story of Jayber's lifelong love for Mattie Chatham, Troy's wife, whom Jayber has worshiped from afar for more than 40 years. It is a chaste love, as pure as Jayber's love for his land and its people. Not being a modern man, Jayber does not moan and rant about the injustices of the world. He merely takes things as they are and goes on. c

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The Banality of Banal

by Clyde Wilson

A Life in the Twentieth Century: Innocent Beginnings, 1917-1950
by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr.
Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin; 557 pp., $28.95

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I first thought I would title this review "Memoirs of the Imperial Jester." The jester being one who, though of no importance himself, is always present at the imperial court, I thought I discerned certain parallels between him and the author of A *Life in the Twentieth Century*. After looking into its pages, however, I saw that I was wrong. A jester should occasionally be amusing, show some shrewd insight, and exercise his special license for candor.

Inevitably, Schlesinger's memoirs get the big publisher and the big hype. Mr. Schlesinger is "the finest historian of our age," according to such dust-jacket celebrities as the erudite Mr. Tom Brokaw and the judicious Mr. Norman Mailer. (How would they know?) The same authorities tell us that this fat book, which takes Arthur Junior up to age 33, is "an eloquent and insightful history of the 20th century" and also "a fabulous journey through the first half of the 20th century." The fact is, Schlesinger is not and never has been an historian but merely a writer of clever political tracts, a press agent for the left wing of the Democratic party (now the *only* wing). In *The Age of Jackson* (his Harvard M.A. thesis), with no fear despite insufficient research, he gave us a supposedly definitive interpretation of the most complicated period of U.S. history. In contrast to all previous (and subsequent) understandings of serious historians, Jacksonian democracy, it appeared, was centered in Boston and New York and uncannily resembled the New Deal coalition of progressive intellectuals and labor radicals.

Schlesinger's blow-by-blow and rather gee-whizzy account of the process of creation herein confirms my longstanding suspicions. The case in *The Age of Jackson* was made by slim research, artful elaboration of out-of-context quotations, the brushing aside of contrary evidence, and the establishment of plausible but nonexistent connections between various movements. A serious historian would have put forth Schlesinger's interpretation of the period in a tentative essay to be explored and tested; years of serious research and thought would occupy him before setting forth so sweeping an historical interpretation. As penman for the imperial state, Schlesinger chose to operate differently, and was well rewarded for it. (It is a curious phenomenon that academic historians as a group, while paying lip service to professional standards, give their admiration to the writers who rise above professional standards to achieve celebrity.)

Schlesinger *qua* "historian" went on to provide us with the definitive middlebrow apologiae for FDR and JFK. Among his other works was *The Vital Center* (1949), which justified the Cold War liberals in kicking their erstwhile communist allies out of the citadel of power and provided the real starting point for the noisy and pernicious phenomenon of neoconservatism. (And all this accomplished while facing the challenges of a *Playboy* interview and the Kennedy swimming pool!) Our memoirist's value as a scholar is conclusively exhibited by his *The Imperial Presidency* (1973), in which he pointed to the dangerous ambitions of executive power under Nixon while suavely justifying the far worse usurpations of Nixon's predecessors as necessary and good.

So Schlesinger is not the "finest historian of our age." But he has known a lot of important people and been in a lot of important places, so surely A *Life in the Twentieth Century* is an interesting, if not a "fabulous," look at our times just passed? Would that it were so. Alas, it is hard to believe anyone could plow through these nearly 600 pages of trivia except a New Deal junkie or a collector of celebrity anecdotes. Autobiography at this level of exhaustive but essentially unrevealing detail might be mildly interesting for a really important historical figure, though I doubt it. For a merely self-important figure, it is an excruciating bore.

Does the world really need to see a picture of stalwart young Arthur busy preparing to interpret history for us all at his preschool desk in Iowa City? Or to savor the boyhood experiences of his father in Xenia, Ohio? (Schlesinger Senior actually was a serious historian of sorts, despite ending up at Harvard.) Do we really need to know faculty-room gossip at Cambridge among historians now, mostly justly, forgotten? One bit of gossip does *not* appear. It can't be proved now but was told to me years ago by an honest man who had been a visiting professor at Harvard: Mrs. Schlesinger, Sr., once got up and fled when a black man sat down beside her in a theater. Here we have the true nature of Boston liberalism revealed in all its naked glory.

Young Arthur never lets us forget that his doings were a part of history even before he was born. "Nineteen twelve was the exciting year of Wilson's New Freedom and of Roosevelt's New Nationalism." The events in his life are also historical watersheds: "My formal education now began." "In September 1931 I traveled forty miles north from Cambridge to boarding school." "Boredom arose in my third undergraduate year." "The war was everywhere," concluded the young warlord at Harvard in 1939. "The war rumbled on" still for our hero as he labored on his first book. "When we wanted sandwiches, we had to use a knife to slice the bread; sliced bread was still in the future." "That summer of 1935 was the last totally relaxed time," for it was then the noble Arthur began the literary career that was to make our times comprehensible to all. "The variety was exciting," he writes of the papers that flowed across his desk in the Office of War Information. And so on.

Is there nothing good to be said at all about A *Life in the Twentieth Century*? Well, it drops a lot of big and medium-sized names, for those that like that sort of thing. The book's main virtue, however, is as primary research material for the future historian of the smug, self-aggrandizing Boston/New York intelligentsia which has been a curse to the American people for two centuries and more now. I'll give that future scholar a working title

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for his research: "Pseudo-Intellectualism as a Force in American History."

Clyde Wilson is thought of in some limited circles as a real historian.

The Bishop's Egg

by Christie Davies

The Politics of Sex and Other Essays on Conservatism, Culture, and Imagination
by Robert Grant
New York: St. Martin's Press; 248 pp., $55.00

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Robert Grant's essays range widely across political philosophy, literature, and aesthetics, from Edmund Burke to Václav Havel, from Jane Austen to the fiction of the 1930's, from Shakespeare to Tolstoy, from Mozart to Rennie Mackintosh. Yet Grant is always knowledgeable, always clear and readable, always interesting. He is able to cover his range of subjects adequately, without ever lapsing into the obscurity of a polymath or the superficial dazzle of a new Renaissance man.

His most interesting essays concern the nature of conservatism. In the foreword to the book, Raymond Tallis writes:

> In Grant's understanding of it . . . true conservatism is no more hostile to change than to ideas. Some change is inevitable, some positively necessary; but it must be properly informed, preserve continuity and respect tradition ("embodied practical knowledge"). Grant's conservatism is not a matter of party, nor confined to politics. It grows out of his perception of the interconnectedness of human concerns, and his respect for whatever has evolved peaceably and naturally out of our long-term dealings with each other. Such things, among them culture, elude a narrowly technological, rationalist prospective.

This is an excellent statement of what Grant stands for and why his essays will be a welcome addition to the libraries of conservative individuals and institutions in the English-speaking countries. Grant writes well about Burke, but it is his two essays on 20th-century conservative philosopher Michael Oakeshott that are of most interest. Oakeshott was a respected thinker, yet—as Grant points out—he was never a global guru (unlike, say, the vacuous John Kenneth Galbraith, the deeply flawed and ideological Gunnar Myrdal, or the fellow-travelling Harold Laski), and he deserves to be more widely known. Grant's essays will help to achieve this. Oakeshott's great contribution was to expose the irrationalism of "Rationalism," by which he meant the idea that politics and government can be planned by reference to "abstract intelligence . . . suitably backed by the necessary technical or factual knowledge." It is a "category mistake" whose proponents fail to see that "every activity generates its own kind of rationality (that is the principles articulate or otherwise, appropriate to its successful pursuit) and that it is foolish and futile to apply the techniques and assumptions appropriate to one kind of activity to others for which they were never designed and from which they never emerged."

It is not just socialism that Oakeshott is attacking but any kind of politics or political thought involving this fallacy. (As Grant points out, he was critical of Hayek as a crypto-rationalist and has nothing in common with the Archimedean rationalism of later liberal thinkers such as Rawls and Nozick.) On the latter thinkers, Grant comments shrewdly that "it would not be altogether unjust to describe their efforts as exactly the sort of 'crib' to politics that Oakeshott once accused Marxism of being." Oakeshott was not a communitarian but an individualist, understood as "a virtuous explorer of his moral, cultural and intellectual inheritance."

There is an interesting continuity between the Oakeshott essays and Grant's own treatment of Charles Rennie Mackintosh and the House Beautiful. Mackintosh, a Scottish architect and furniture designer, was modern and imperious and still has fanatical admirers in countries as distant from Scotland as Japan. An "aesthetic planner," as Grant calls him, he deliberately designed chairs with backs twice as high as a seated man so that they would be uncomfortable, incompatible with the presence of children, and easily breakable, particularly in the Scottish tea shops that bought them. The fragility of the furniture emphasized the decorum of the tea rooms, in contrast to the raucous and sometimes violent inebriation of the lower-class Glaswegian bar, where even the most robust of furnishings might regularly be smashed to fragments. But then, speculation about aesthetic fashion is vain. It is difficult, for example, to see why we should accept Grant's thesis that the preceding high-Victorian interiors, whether in Scotland or America, rigorously excluded anything remotely suggestive of death from open display. Surely he is wrong; in an age of early death, the clutter of knickknacks was also a parade of relics of those who had died—the carved walrus tooth brought back by Captain Uncle Harold, long since drowned in the wintry North Atlantic; the vases left to the householder in poor consumptive cousin Mildred's will.

Robert Grant's book is a bishop's egg: Nearly all of it is good, my lord. The Oakeshott and Burke yolk will nourish the mind of the reader, and the aesthetic albumen is bound to please; only the shell is doubtful—the cover has the feel of a Carrington executed by Lytton Strachey's devotee of that name.

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Hugging Himself

by Jeffrey Meyers

A Life of James Boswell
by Peter Martin
New Haven: Yale University Press; 613 pp., $35.00

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James Boswell (1740-95), whose frank and revealing *London Journal* sold more than a million copies, is the most "modern" and widely read 18th-century author. His circle of friends—Johnson, Burke, Gibbon, Reynolds, Hume, Goldsmith, Garrick, and Fanny Burney—was the most brilliant in the history of English literature. Cursed with a morbid Calvinistic streak, Boswell had uneasy relations with his austere disapproving father, a high-court judge in Scotland, whom he compared to a cold surgical instrument. A pushy and self-promoting,

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anxious and ambitious outsider, Boswell nevertheless had a genius for friendship. He successfully courted two notorious intellectual celebrities, Voltaire and Rousseau, whose lives and thought were antithetical to those of his moral hero, Samuel Johnson. Forced by his father into a law career, he lost several clients to the gallows and witnessed their executions. His adventurous trip to the wilds of bandit-ridden Corsica, then ruled by Genoa, led to his passionate support for revolutionary hero Pasquale Paoli. Boswell's *Account of Corsica* established his reputation in Europe and influenced British and French policy toward the island.

Boswell had an intense, volatile relationship with Johnson, who shared his melancholia and was one of the most troubled and fascinating men who ever lived. Boswell's fanatical devotion to his subject (Johnson exclaimed: "You have but two topics, yourself and me, and I'm sick of both"), compulsive searching out of original documents, denigration of competitors and rivals, attention to anecdote and minute detail, his creation of a "Flemish picture" and dramatization of crucial episodes in the life of his subject—all established the technique and form of modern biography.

Boswell suffered throughout his life from religious crises, alcoholism, and manic-depression. He had an uneasy marriage with a wife who died early of consumption. Obsessed by low life and filthy prostitutes, he craved a harem, saying, "I ought to be a Turk," and suffered 20 bouts of gonorrhea. Like Pepys and Casanova, Boswell was passionately introspective; his journals expose, with brutal honesty, his sexual philandering and illegitimate children. Boswell tells us more about himself, and all his faults, than any writer ever has.

In the 1920's, the dramatic discovery of his papers (now at Yale) in an ancient Irish castle revealed a treasure trove of information. Yet Boswell has been sterilized by his academic biographers. Frederick Pottle's *James Boswell: The Earlier Years* (1966) and Frank Brady's *James Boswell: The Later Years* (1984) are scholarly, leaden, and desperately dull. The path is wide open for a one-volume life intended for the general reader. Peter Martin's life is clearly written and solidly researched. But since the best parts of the story are all too familiar, it lacks a vital spark and isn't nearly as good as the lives of Johnson by John Wain, W.J. Bate, and Lawrence Lipking. Martin quotes, but doesn't analyze, the letters, concentrates on events themselves rather than on their meaning, and produces many superfluously detailed sentences—such as "Young Coll was leading them to Sir Allan Maclean's cottage on the island of Inchkenneth, just off the coast next to the island of Ulva at the mouth of Loch Na Keal"—which, to most readers, are meaningless. He has nothing original to say about *The Life of Johnson*.

Martin gives repetitive accounts of Boswell's boredom, depression, gambling, alcoholism, sexual escapades, venereal disease, and obsession with public executions, but doesn't explain this psychopathology. The boredom came from the dour life in provincial, Presbyterian Scotland; the depression was a family curse that had turned his brother into a raving maniac. Boswell took refuge in self-destructive gaming and drinking ("I grew monstrously drunk . . . mingled frenzy and stupefaction") and in that state was sometimes beaten, robbed, and thrown into the gutter. He burst into romantic raptures about women of his own class ("how happy should I be if she consented . . . to make me blest!") and devised specious arguments to justify fornication and adultery ("irregular coition was . . . no dreadful crime"). His "whoring rage" was particularly rabid when he toured Italy, pursuing married women despite the danger of instant death if discovered by their husbands. As Geoffrey Scott elegantly put it: "he was pedantic in Holland, princely in Germany, philosophic in Switzerland, and amorous in Italy." In one ardent encounter, his mistress is "undressed by the maid, too modest to do so in front of Boswell, who with candle in hand paces impatiently outside in the dark and cold courtyard." In another assignation, this one with the pregnant wife of a soldier, his telegraphic style foreshadows Leopold Bloom's stream of consciousness in the "Nighttown" scene of *Ulysses*: "Oho! a safe piece. In my closet . . . To be directly. In a minute—over. I rose cool and astonished, half angry, half laughing. I sent her off."

These guilt-ridden depravities demanded self-punishment in the form of venereal disease. (Despite the manifest danger with prostitutes, Boswell was usually without "armour.") These encounters sometimes led to genital abscesses that made it difficult to walk and took five months to heal. His obsession with executions, sometimes viewed from the top of the hearse that would carry away the victims, provided a terrifying warning (often accompanied by nightmares) for sinners—like himself—who were surely destined for damnation. Boswell's attraction to condemned criminals was closely connected to his sympathy for the oppressed and for underdogs of all sorts, from his feudal tenants to the American revolutionaries. When his first cousin and future wife hesitated about committing herself to such a mercurial character, Boswell threatened to set sail for America and become "a wild Indian." Though his sexual guilt continued with his wife, he constantly betrayed her (instead of confessing, he left his journals around for her to read); his "voluptuous" demands when she was pregnant and tubercular made her cough up blood.

Boswell's character was a mass of contradictions. Exuberant and spontaneous, unguarded and familiar, he was good natured and high spirited, agreeable and likeable, with a genius for pleasing: "one of those people," a friend observed, "with whom one instantly feels acquainted." Boswell could also be fatuously proud of his ancestral lineage (though his wife reminded him that they were "no better than any other gentleman's family") and absurd in his self-complacent posturing. He dedicated an anonymous ode to himself, thanking "James Boswell Esq . . . for the profound respect with which you have always treated me." He told Rousseau that he fully deserved his friendship, called himself "one of the most engaging men that ever lived," and when especially pleased with himself "just sat and hugged myself in my own mind." But Boswell could also be self-critical. He admitted that his knowledge was restricted, his self-esteem excessive, his avarice extreme. His journals were a brilliant register of his follies and triumphs.

Boswell's friendship with Johnson was the central event of his life. Although he sometimes rebuked his friend (always impatient with human folly) for his severe tongue-lashings, he deliberately drew Johnson's fire in order to create memorable scenes. The two men's arduous journey through the wilds of Scotland (where "no wheel had ever rolled") proved that Johnson's feelings for Boswell were greater than his prejudice against his native land and inspired Boswell's second masterpiece, *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*. Although they could sit silently together for a "long time in a sort of languid, grave state, like men

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watching a corpse," when they conversed on serious subjects, Johnson stretched Boswell's mind to the utmost. When his great friend died, Boswell wrote: "He has made a chasm, which not only nothing can fill up, but which nothing has a tendency to fill up . . . No man can be said to put you in mind of Johnson." He then dedicated himself to the task he had been preparing for throughout his adult life and settled down to write the greatest biography in the English language.

Jeffrey Meyers has recently published Orwell: Wintry Conscience of a Generation *(Norton),* Privileged Moments: Encounters with Writers *(Wisconsin), and* Hemingway: Life into Art *(Cooper Square).*

The Way Forward Is With a Broken Head

by J.O. Tate

The Way Forward Is With a Broken Heart
by Alice Walker
New York: Random House;
201 pp., $23.95

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Symptoms: Health fine until reads Walker latest. Immediate somatic distress of all systems incl. pulmonary; digestive crisis, upper, middle, and lower; cardiac irregularity; low and high blood pressure; skin rashes and lesions; emerging hyperallergenic reactions to paper, ink, reading process. Psychosomatic reactions: delusions of persecution, fears of apocalypse, entropic anxieties, all leading to reaction formation of unjustified bipolar despair/joy.

Toxins Indicated: Walker syntactic breakdown, sentence fragments, logical void. Word processing/chat room/cultural inversion induces paranoid hostility. Walker notes for first draft publ. as "book" = other books on shelf/outrage<fraud. Self-serving smarm and lack of craft and coherence>nausea. Narcissistic twaddle palmed off as "art." Deserves "F" in community college "creative writing" class. Identity crisis: Countercultural pose sanctioned by big-time establishment publisher w/book tour = demonstration of big lie. Counterculture = establishment.

Gnosis: Political and other antinomianism, cornball sentiments, approves of *The Bridges of Madison County*. Alice Walker subject = Alice Walker. "Autobiographical" "stories" = failure of imagination but needs new book for book tour and money, tax write-offs. Problem: how to retain victim status while exploiting success. Solution: self-absorbed recitals of thinly disguised but entirely self-serving blathering about victimization—race, poverty, civil-rights movement, writing, resentments of family, divorce, feelings, feelings about feelings. Account of divorce = account of her sensitivity then and now; ex-husband not entirely friendly about divorce = male shortcoming. Alice Walker motifs throughout "book" repeat familiar themes for dissertations about Alice Walker being written even now. Motifs: approving citations of communist dictators such as Fidel Castro (compare Maurice Bishop in previous essay); numerous accounts of men hitting women and men betraying women (though no man wrote *this* junk); crying a lot (though only this book itself justifies tears); unassimilated references to food, lesbian stories, and acknowledgments of self-absorption and such demonstrations of ignorance as "*I asked him Why not and he said that white male writers, like Faulkner and Hawthorne and Mark Twain never wrote about themselves, and that they were masters at it. And I asked him whether this didn't come out of a tradition of being a writer but needing to keep quiet about the slaving and gunrunning and Indian killing in your family tree. In other words, I said, if white men wrote truthfully about themselves, how could they continue to fool the rest of us?*" Acknowledgment of wealth problem, in exceptional statement of grammatical order: "Today I own large, beautiful houses, overcompensation for the shacks in which I was raised; and when I travel, my hotel suite is nearly as large as our old house." Footnotes to names of characters, denying that they are real names, bizarre in book of stories—confusion of complete self-absorption trumps any generic/conventional considerations. Reading Alice Walker = entertaining alien "thoughts." To do that = psychic crisis.

Diagnosis: Alice Walker problem superficial—only part of larger cultural crisis which shatters reason, identity, and knowledge. Reaction essentially healthy = rejection of chaos. Indignation righteous. Therefore: return to order with good, not bad, art. Reaffirm sound values. Health issue takes care of itself if strip malls, contemporary popular music, and toxic anti-discourse are avoided.

Prescriptive Psychic Antitoxins: Attend Latin Masses. Read Bible in spite of her reading it. Read Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas. Read fiction with care for syntactical/logical reaffirmation: Smollett, Fielding, Austen, Waugh. Go to museums, looking only at representational art at least 200 years old. Practice "male gaze" on provocative sculptures. Tour Europe, ignore teenagers and traffic. Look at cathedrals and castles. Listen to Bach, Mozart, Beethoven. Rent John Wayne videos, films noirs ditto. Cultivate phallogocentric restoratives: open doors for women, flirt, etc. Practice good manners especially when that annoys countercultural aliens.

Physical Therapies Recommended: Tobacco (filters). Alcohol (ladies' cocktails counterindicated). Wine with pasta and other eurocentric foods. Hitting things (baseballs, golf balls, hockey pucks). Kicking things (footballs, soccer balls, doors). Running (not jogging). Boxing, martial arts. Swearing, good for lungs and head. Join gun club, obtain license to carry, practice quick draw and aim, avoid hearing damage from hours of shooting. Acquire shotgun (twelve-gauge pump, buckshot) for residential protection. Cultivate manliness at all times. To keep on toes, accept offers to step outside of bars.

Rx (Homeopathic Remedies, Caution Indicated): To ease transition into debased *Zeitgeist*, immerse in destructive element. Sample Richard Simmons *Sweatin' to the Oldies* videos, Julia Roberts movies, Hillary Rodham Clinton photos daily in newspapers, Oprah Winfrey whining about weight and wealth problems daily on television, etc. Check out political pronouncements of Alec Baldwin, Barbra Streisand, Barney Frank, and Jerrold Nadler. Memorize Al Gore unctions about "saving the integrity of our democratic process." Approach Alice Walker "books" with forked stick. Take two aspirins and call in morning.

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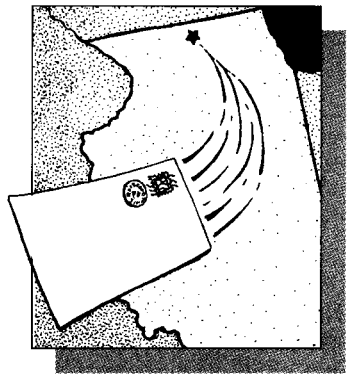
Letter From Rockford

by Scott P. Richert

I've Got a Secret



Back in November and December, while Republicans across the country were writing letters, calling in to talk radio, and even taking to the streets to protest Al Gore's attempt to steal the election in Florida, their fellow party members in Rockford remained strangely silent. They must have found it disquieting when the Bush campaign kept insisting that machines are more accurate than humans. After all, it's been a staple of local Republican belief for almost 20 years that Rockford Democrats have manipulated computerized counting machines to steal at least three of the last five mayoral elections.

In theory, at least, it's possible. As James J. Condit argued in *Chronicles* four years ago ("A House Without Doors," *Views*, November 1996), the same technology that simplifies the process of counting votes also makes it much easier to steal an election. Since computerized counting is conducted at central locations, ballots must be moved, which means there's an opportunity to substitute pre-punched ballots for the ones voters actually used. If that fails, the counting machines' computers can be programmed to return the desired result.

While I have been a pollwatcher during one local election and have observed the vote counting after another, I've seen no evidence that local Democrats have actually tampered with either ballots or counting machines. But I am convinced of the truth of a related conspiracy theory: Most politicians in Rockford are heavily influenced by a small group of public contractors and real-estate developers. Their own campaign-finance disclosure statements on the Illinois Board of Elections website (*www.elections.state.il.us*) provide plenty of evidence.

But if everyone here in Rockford has heard that the last two mayors have simply been pawns of monied interests (and everyone has), then why have the Democrats won the last five mayoral elections in a city routinely described as Republican? The simple answer could be that local voters just don't care.

There may, however, be more at work here. When most people—in Rockford or elsewhere—hear the word "conspiracy," they think of a cabal aimed at overturning the will of the people. That's certainly the way popular literature, movies, and TV shows portray conspiracies. But if you were trying to gain power (or wealth) in the modern world, why would you set yourself against the people? It's much easier to present yourself as their champion. Give them what they want, and they will return the favor.

Both Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor and the Cigarette-Smoking Man on *The X-Files* understood this. So, too, did the interests that backed Rockford Democratic mayoral candidate John McNamara in 1981. A blue-collar town heavily dependent on the aerospace industry, Rockford had been hit hard by the recession of the late 70's and early 80's. Unemployment was over 20 percent; factories were closing; new businesses weren't taking up the slack. Rockford was on its way to becoming a ghost town.

Helped along by the Reagan military buildup (which revitalized Rockford's industries), John McNamara gave the people what they wanted—economic recovery—while enriching his benefactors through a series of public-works projects (knocking down Rockford's historic buildings and erecting Soviet-style ones), tax breaks, and zoning changes that encouraged private development. By the time McNamara left office in 1989, Rockford's economy had not only rebounded but added a service sector (read: strip malls and chain restaurants). The public-works contractors and real-estate developers who had supported him were firmly entrenched, and he was able to handpick his successor: our current mayor, Democrat Charles Box. Box has nurtured the city's relationship with McNamara's benefactors, and McNamara himself became president of the parent company of the chief public-works contractor, Rockford Blacktop.

Because many of us don't like the intimate connection between Rockford Blacktop and our city government, we often forget that most people in Winnebago County don't mind as long as the roads that Blacktop builds make it easier for them to drive from the vinyl-sided ranch houses they bought from Gambino Realtors to the strip malls that Sunil Puri's First Rockford Group built. In other words, those who supported John McNamara in 1981 have triumphed—not by working against the people, but by recognizing what they wanted and using that knowledge to gain power and wealth. (If government weren't involved, libertarians would undoubtedly proclaim this a stunning example of the virtues of the free market.)

That doesn't change the fact that a small elite dominates the government of Rockford and Winnebago County for its own enrichment, but it changes the political dynamic. Those of us who recognize what's wrong here in Rockford can't count on setting it right by winning elections—particularly since politicians in both parties realize which side their bread is buttered on. Our next mayoral election (in April) will pit a Democratic state representative with strong ties to the McNamara/Box machine against a Republican businessman who shares a campaign-finance chairman—and several key supporters—with the current Democratic mayor. What's the point of having two parties?

At its root, the degeneration of modern democracy is a cultural problem, not a political one. Once political power is vested in the people, all that stands between oligarchy and freedom is the virtue of the masses. In the 18th and 19th centuries, "popular" revolutions failed because the revolutionaries didn't realize the extent to which the people were still attached to throne and altar. But now, the throne is occupied by the likes of Bill Clinton and the altar is attended by Jesse

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Jackson, and Americans don't mind. They may say they do; they may even think they do; but their actions speak louder than their words. Bill Clinton could have awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom to the Prince of Lies, and he would still have left office with a 70-percent approval rating. (Come to think of it, he *did* award the medal to the Reverend Jackson.)

So why do local Republicans continue to believe that the only way Mayors McNamara and Box could have won power was by stealing elections? The trouble is not that they can't see the forest for the trees, but that they mistake one tiny leaf for the whole of human existence. Yes, many who desire power are corrupt; yes, sometimes they break the law to achieve their ends; but often, they don't have to. Why overthrow governments, stuff ballot boxes, or manipulate counting machines when you can achieve your ends simply by saying what the people think they want to hear, while doing what the people actually want done?

At the end of George W. Bush's four or eight years as President, *Roe* v. *Wade* will still be the law of the land, more states will have recognized homosexual "marriages," more American businesses will have moved overseas, more women and homosexuals will have joined the military, more Americans will have died while killing innocent civilians in countries we have no business attacking, multiculturalism and bilingualism will have increased their hold on American education (remember, Pater's Department of Education first dreamed up Goals 2000), and immigration—both illegal and legal—will have increased. And here in Rockford, no matter which party wins the next mayoral election, Rockford Blacktop will still pave our streets, Sunil Puri will still level farmland and forests to put up strip malls and vinyl-sided ranches, and "Dr." Richard Ragsdale will still murder babies. Because, in the end, *that's what the people want.*

History is indeed made by men in a room somewhere; but in the modern era, those men have found that it's easier to control the course of events by adding on to the room and letting more folks inside. Soon—perhaps already—those of us on the outside will be in the minority.

* * *

Psst. Hey, you—the guy at the keyboard. Your conclusions may be right, but your theory's all wrong. Wanna know the truth about the presidential election? It was all rigged from the beginning—has been, in fact, since at least 1988. That's why George Senior was so smug in those early primaries, and Bob Dole was so frustrated. He knew he couldn't win; wasn't supposed to. And 1992? Give me a break. No sitting president could run such a bad campaign unless he were trying to throw the election.

You see, it was all a setup. The Skull and Bones know that the American people are a bunch of suckers who can't get past the appearance of a two-party system. What better way to hide the fact that they're pulling the strings than to remove the pachyderm puppet from the stage once in a while, and replace him with a jackass marionette? Clinton's not a Bonesman, but he is Yale Law, so he knows the score. This year, however, it was time to bring the presidency back home. So they crowned Dubya almost a year before the first primary and forced the only man who represented a threat out of the GOP and into a dead-end third party. The stage was set: They knew Al Gore would play along—after all, he'd picked a graduate of Yale and Yale Law as his running mate. (Surely you didn't think Bill Buckley took such a shine to Joe Lieberman because of his religious values?)

But then the Boners made a mistake: They thought it would be fun to have a real horse race, but they cut it too close in Florida. Tired of playing second fiddle—to his father, to Clinton, to Tipper, to Joe, and now to some smug son of a Bonesman—Al grabbed the bow and started calling the dance. But he forgot one thing—Clarence Thomas. Yale Law. (You didn't think George Senior nominated him just because of his race, did you?) The poor sap didn't have a chance.

Funny thing is, it all worked out better for the Bonesmen this way. Al couldn't let the American people know just what he was fighting against—most of them would have thought he was nuts. And now, all those conspiracy theorists who used to think that Skull and Bones or the CFR or the Trilateral Commission or the Rockefellers or the Bilderbergers might be calling the shots have fallen right into line. After all, the Democrats tried to steal the election, and the Republicans would never do that, right? Next time, the Bonesmen may not even need to swap marionettes.

Anyway, that's the real reason those Republicans in Rockford were so quiet during the Florida recount: THEY KNEW.

Pass it on.

c

Saw

by John Nixon, Jr.

"For Beauty, Finish and Utility,"
Poetically claimed its maker, "This
Saw Cannot be Excelled." Next, "Henry Disston"
And "Philadelphia" are, after more
Than sixty years, still legible along
The blade. With tiny teeth, it was the tool
My father used for slicing quarter-round
And other "finish" work.

Now, when a storm
Has littered this large yard with maple, ash,
And locust limbs, both Mr. Disston and
My father would be horrified to watch
Me take their venerable saw out, clear
My way through green debris. At least it gives
New life, new meaning to "Utility"
Before I am myself sawed off, nailed down.

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Letter From Venice

by Andrei Navrozov

The Women's Movement

◆

After an uninterrupted spell of a winter month or two here in Venice—all footsteps in the evening mist, and quiet conversation about the best way to cook pheasant, and a Neapolitan card game called "seven and a half"—what one notices on arriving in London is the way women move. First of all, it's the speed. Within the most madamed, to say nothing of pompadoured, porcelain leafiness of Chelsea and Knightsbridge, one is suddenly startled by the ku-klux-klan of the gunlock, stopcock, and clockwork to-ing and fro-ing associated with the streets of Manhattan in the bull days when young clerks, who called themselves bankers, first began walking to work wearing running shoes while carrying their walking shoes with them.

Secondly, it's the angle. In the streets of Italian cities, in Venice as in Florence or Rome, women move with a hyperbolic serenity, with that stochastic smoothness which flows from the notion of an easily and pleasurably achieved moral aim. The overall impression is that of the graceful Brownian swarming one expects to find at the threshold of an Oriental gateway, whether what lies beyond the gate is a mere sultan's bedchamber or some heavenly paradise. I quote from the Second Sura of the Glorious Qur'an, which a Syrian girl called Hala once gave me for my birthday on the charming and solemn condition that I always keep it on the topmost shelf of my bookcase:

> To each is a goal
> To which he turns;
> Then strive together
> Towards all that is good.
> Wheresoever ye are,
> God will direct you.

This really is the philosophical layout of a typical piazza in an Italian town, a theatrical souk studded with busy cafés and encrusted with somnolent shops, where the chorus of women swirls through the ranks of seated, or at least contemplative, men like a jewelled comb through a storybook beauty's hair. God is a good director. His productions are interesting.

By contrast, even in the King's Road, Chelsea's perennial tourist seraglio with a reputation for charivari, incense, and idleness surviving from another era, one rarely catches a glimpse of anything other than the abrupt zig of the angular shoulder and the nervous zag of the plastic mannequin head. My point is that, to men, women represent life, and I've grown tired of looking at life that is all jagged shards, as though in a smashed rearview mirror of a badly parked builder's van. I wonder if this means I've finally grown tired of London.

The fashionable cinema in the King's Road is showing a new American film called *Charlie's Angels*. Ordinarily, in the history of the imagination of the world, East or West, angels belong to God and are God's, but in Hollywood they are Charlie's. Accordingly, on the film's posters, the actresses chosen for the part of angels appear to be angular, scrawny, hostile, wingless, and frozen in the abortive indelicacy of a martial-arts pose. Please imagine a painting in which a divine messenger might be required to make an appearance, such as the Annunciation, and judge what sort of Virgin, and what kind of God, would be consistent with the face and the demeanor of one of these creatures. As though to complete the bestial conceit, the actresses have been photographed and celebrated in the press upon being presented to the Prince of Wales, heir to the throne and defender of the faith. Charlie's angels, get it?

The mass image is so radically and incontrovertibly a new departure in the history of the Eternal Feminine that an Italian magazine has run a cover story on the emerging global trend masterminded by Hollywood toward *un fisico bestiale*, a bestial physique. The accompanying cry of dissent, an anguished counterclaim that "*a noi piacciono sempre morbide*" (we Italians still like them soft), is supported by a huge photo-still of the superstar of the moment—Monica Bellucci *tutta curve*—all curves, now appearing in Giuseppe Tornatore's film *Malèna*, a story of seduction set in Sicily that has been setting box-office records here. In the picture, Miss Bellucci is clad in the nostalgic and intricate armor of femininity that brings to mind the Raymond Chandler phrase "cute as lace pants."

It is interesting to note that all the places where women have cast off womanhood down to the last, seventh veil, such as the United States, Germany, Holland, and the Scandinavian countries, are famous for both the production and the proliferation of pornography. The places where women continue to exhibit the hyperbolic serenity of which I speak, such as France, Italy, and the rest of the Mediterranean countries verging on the Muslim world, are equally famous for the design and manufacture of women's clothes, including lace pants, which is a much bigger industry than pornography. In other words, no sooner does the woman publicly declare herself free to become a judge, a priest, or a banker than publicly she is made to strip naked. Whereas—in the absence of such a vociferous declaration—while in fact being perfectly free to judge, pray, or bank as she wishes, the woman is a protected object of cultural veneration and a mainstay of the national economy.

I'm neither flirting with Islamic fundamentalism nor affecting the barroom habits of thought now called "male chauvinism." I'm merely doing what I have done since coming to Italy, using the modern, changing London as a foil for my increasingly real life here. My friend Andriana M— is a Venetian in her 70's, but in the foggy aftermath of a supper I gave for her, she found no fewer than three telephone numbers inside her handbag, all slipped in there by rather younger men who were so taken by her beauty, her charm, and her wit that they had forgotten that a liter of Russky Standart, even when chased down with pickled mushrooms, marinated herrings, and sturgeon caviar, divides into two with most remarkable consequences. My neighbor Donatella A— is only half a generation behind, yet so luminous is her face, so serene her movement, and so hypnotic her whole dynamic silhouette that it is not uncommon for men of almost any age to freeze, openmouthed,

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while watching her cross Campo S. Stefano in the company of a golden retriever. And Stella C—, a young mother, tragically widowed, vestal, with the face of a Cimabue Madonna, is somebody to whom I imagine an absolute stranger will one day propose, on bended knee, with a small bouquet of mainland daisies and a diamond rivière from Chatila of Old Bond Street and Rue du Rhône, in the middle of a crowded *vaporetto* during the lunchtime rush hour.

Such are the human types whose fascination I can never see waning, and the streets of London now strike me—as the streets of Manhattan did 20, and more than 20, years ago—as almost completely bereft of the life they represent. They are the actresses who have been auditioned by God, the director, and chosen to play the part of the angels in an action film without an opening sequence, whose final meaning is civilization. They are now being blacklisted, pushed out, and replaced by Charlie's globally projected inventions, with the immediate prospect of barbarizing mankind more effectively than any religious fanaticism or political doctrine. For what all the artifacts of civilization—our basilicas and our railways stations, our iconic Madonnas and our reclining odalisques, our farthingales and our lace pants—ever had in common was that they made up a spectacle worth watching. Well, no more, says Hollywood. No more, repeats Madison Avenue. No more, echoes the King's Road.

This is why the women's movement is all wrong. *Un fisico bestiale* and a boring, boring director.

Andrei Navrozov is Chronicles' *European correspondent.*

Letter From Indonesia

by Doug Bandow

Jakarta's Seething Volcano

◆

You had to look closely to see the thick strands of barbed wire in the shrubs in front of my hotel. I've traveled all over the world, including to Kosovo, but this was the first time I've stayed in a hotel that was fortified. The staff explained that it was there in case of another riot: Mobs tend to target businesses, especially those owned by Chinese.

There were no riots while I was visiting, but I sensed a country ready to blow. So, naturally, there are people who want America to get involved—not that Washington has ever been far from the action.

For three decades, the now-enfeebled Suharto won U.S. support by opposing communism. Along the way, he built a kleptocracy that turned his family into billionaires. But he stayed in power by spreading the cash. Today, quiet neighborhoods host beautiful homes owned by retired generals and well-connected businessmen. Some of the wealth even made it down to the mass of people. Symbols of Western influence—Pizza Hut and McDonald's, for instance—abound.

The 1997 Asian economic crisis, however, turned the vast wealth gaps into a political minefield. U.S. and International Monetary Fund aid could not prevent the riots that led the military to discard Suharto. The result is an unstable democracy headed by President Wahid Abdurrahman, whose physical incapacities and mental inconsistencies long ago lost their charm. The country seems to be slowly sliding into chaos.

There's nothing necessarily wrong with a fragmented Indonesia. Whether Aceh and Irian Jaya end up independent of Jakarta is not of earthshaking importance to America. But whether a breakup occurs peacefully is of concern, and that doesn't seem likely. Indeed, Indonesia is driven by the kind of cultural conflict that should most worry the United States: a modern religious war.

Tensions in the Moluccan Islands run back to colonial times, when the Dutch relied on their coreligionists to help them rule. One former Indonesian official complained about "all the time bombs left by the Dutch." A Christian-dominated secessionist movement in the Spice Islands sputtered along for years.

For nearly two years, Christians and Muslims have been battling in and around the provincial capital of Ambon. As many as 4,000 have died, and more than 100,000 people have fled. Many have made the treacherous boat trip to surrounding islands. There are more than 8,000 Christian refugees on another island in the city of Manado, and more are arriving daily.

The killing is primitive but effective: Weapons include bombs, guns, even machetes. Death is a daily occurrence. In denying that a massacre had occurred last year, military spokesman Lt. Col. Iwa Budiman explained that "It was just normal fighting between the two sides."

Lobulisa Leo, a retired general, notes that local Christians and Muslims "would start fighting, and then normally two or three days later settle it. This was a normal happening." In his view, local people have tired of the killing. "Ambonese, Christians and Muslims of Moluccan origin, are fed up." But with the arrival of Laskar Jihad, or "holy warrior troops," the problem has spread beyond the locals. The Muslims "must follow the provocateurs, or they will be killed."

What makes this sectarian conflict so fearsome is the rising impact of fundamentalist Islam. Warns Lobulisa, "Lately Indonesia has sent a lot of students to get their degrees in Muslim countries, Muslim universities. They brought back Muslim ideas—represented by the Hezbollah forces."

As a result, since World War II, the impact of "more radical Islamic elements" has been spreading. More ominously, "I have seen it in the army," says Lobulisa. In January 2000, more than 80,000 Muslims marched in Jakarta to demand a *jihad*, or holy war, against Christians; Amien Rais, head of Indonesia's parliament, appeared at the rally, explaining that "Our patience has limits."

In the beginning, Moluccan Christians were able to defend themselves. But Muslims advanced because they were "backed up by those outside," explained a retired military officer. Some Indonesian soldiers sent to the islands to stop the killing have intervened on behalf of the Muslim majority; others have turned over their weapons. And a number have simply stood by as Jihad forces arrived. "The military hasn't done anything," complained one Christian leader.

That comes as no surprise. Then-Defense Minister Juwono Sudarsono admitted that "some or even many members of the army" have become a "major cause of the clashes." He wanted them discharged, but acknowledged that there was nothing he could do.

The government's responsibility is unclear. So far, President Wahid—who, in August, offered a plan to bring peace to the Mideast—has been incapable or unwilling to stop the killing. Some also blame Vice President Megawati

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Sukarnoputri, who has seemed more interested in improving her standing with the Muslim political parties than in preventing Muslim fundamentalists from killing Christians.

A retired general, who wished to remain anonymous, believes that there are only a few "fanatic Muslims" in the army's leadership, so Wahid simply "needs to replace them." But Lobulisa is more pessimistic: "We have changed the top management of the military and the police already three times." A military spokesman, Rear Air Marshall Graito Usodo, says it is "inevitable" that soldiers would "act emotionally" and disobey orders. Even President Wahid, said one Christian leader, admitted to him in a private meeting that "it was very hard." While he can give a command, "it doesn't reach the grass roots."

Some political factions don't want to solve the conflict. Many Christians assume that enemies of Wahid, including one-time Suharto allies, are attempting to use the Moluccan conflict to destabilize the government. One Christian leader opined that the attacks in the Moluccas were "an attack on" Wahid. Some in authority share his fears. Defense Minister Juwono believed that Suharto "cronies" were at work, perhaps in an attempt to create sufficient chaos to prevent them from being called to account for their crimes.

What do they hope to gain? Tjahyono Tri, the grounds manager at Doulos Bible School—destroyed in December 1999 by a Muslim mob—believes that some of those supporting this "think maybe they can become leaders." The goal for others "is to make this a Muslim country." Several Christians particularly fear the latter goal. One professor claimed: "They are trying to put pressure on parliament. They want Indonesia to become an Islamic state. They want to change the constitution."

The violence is spreading throughout the entire country. Jihad groups have attempted, with varying success, to inflame attacks on Christians in Bali, Sulawesi, and West Timor.

Throughout the country, some 100 churches were burned in 1998 and 1999. Christians are not safe even in Jakarta, the nation's capital. "They hate Christians, because the number of Christians is growing. Muslims are converting. They feel Christians are threatening their religion," explains Robert Lesnussa, a Bible teacher.

In the winter of 1999, thousands of Muslims descended upon Doulos, a seminary and hospital. The rioters wrecked the facilities and killed a 23-year-old student named Sarimam. Two other students almost died, and another 30 were injured. "There was no reason," said Lesnussa, who explained that the 395 students had good relations with their neighbors. But months earlier, a Hezbollah group had threatened to destroy the facility. A month before the attack, Doulos was vilified in a local mosque because it allegedly sought to "Christianize the Muslims in Indonesia."

The buildings remain ruins, burnt beams amid concrete rubble. There is no formal legal justification to block rebuilding, but the government typically refuses permission in the face of threats from surrounding Muslims. "There is no solution for Christians," Lesnussa observes. "If you rebuild, many people will die."

Even viewing the ruins wasn't simple. "The situation here is not good," said Lesnussa, as darkness descended. "We shouldn't stay too late. This area is not safe." In fact, several churches were burned in Jakarta last year. Some perceive the military's hand in the riots. "Normal people won't do stuff like this," argued one Christian.

The fear is palpable. "Christian villages have been burned down. People have fled to the mountains. They have no hope. That's why we need help," says Lobulisa. A group of Christians—educators, journalists, pastors, retired military, and businessmen—met in Jakarta to talk with me and two other American visitors about rising persecution, but they insisted on not publicizing the meeting. One politely observed at the start, "the situation is very difficult." But emotions soon rose, prompting another almost to shout, "people are crying for help."

They offered a series of horror stories: a son murdered, neighbors killed, villages uprooted, churches and schools burned—all with the complicity of the government and security forces.

Despair is a natural reaction. As a former general turned religious leader put it, "Because of the Moluccas, Christians feel they really can't rely too much on the central government. Despite all of the promises, no good has been done. It is getting worse."

A coalition of churches, ranging from Catholic to Pentecostal, have called for a mass evacuation of Christians by the U.N. high commissioner for refugees and the introduction of peacekeeping forces by the United Nations.

The people whom I met were united in little other than a desire that the United States do something. All agreed that the Jihad warriors need to be removed. Some would prefer to substitute police for army forces; others hope that the military might play a genuine peacekeeping role. As a Christian professor noted, "we must force the Indonesian armed forces to do something." The only way they can see that happening is "intervention from outside," as one participant put it. A Christian journalist explained: "We want action from the United States. Or action from other Western countries, from the United Nations."

A senior editor at a Christian newspaper said that "America should do something as it is responsible," because of its past support for Suharto. The head of a religious institute similarly argued that "America and the Western countries have to contribute concrete action to stop these actions." Another spoke of "moral support and pressure, strong pressure." Some wanted an investigation from outside. The leader of a Christian umbrella group suggested an embargo; others feared that it would hurt Christians the most.

All of the participants wanted more than just words. One proposed sending in humanitarian workers and observers, particularly the International Red Cross, a suggestion which others criticized for not being "realistic." But an evangelist wanted the Red Cross to be a tripwire: "If the International Red Cross came, the Muslims would be afraid to kill them. If they murdered someone from the IRC, the U.N. would not allow it. The U.N. would put troops in to stop it." Others were more skeptical of the United Nation's likely response.

A gentleman whose son had been murdered pointed to Kosovo. "You sought permission of the government after more than a million people died in Sudan. Why didn't you drop bombs on the damn people in Khartoum?" He would "welcome" Kosovo-like intervention in Indonesia.

Others also saw Kosovo as a model.

MOVING?

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Simple humanitarian help, they believe, is unrealistic because the Muslims "are killing now. Action needs to be directed like Kosovo. It needs to be discussed in the U.N. Security Council." International pressure might cause the Indonesian military to stop the conflict; if not, "the West should act." A retired general argued that the goal should be to "make the military neutral. If not, then act like in Kosovo."

I didn't point out that such intervention was unlikely because Indonesian Christians aren't white Europeans. Moreover, Indonesia is too important to threaten. The world's fourth most populous state, it has the largest Muslim population. Washington has no intention of shaking a country ready to explode.

Nor does outside military action seem a viable answer. Kosovo-like intervention would be difficult to mount and likely to have disastrous consequences. Introduction of U.N. troops with Jakarta's consent would be almost as dangerous; unlike in East Timor, a large proportion of the population in the Moluccas would resist any foreign occupation.

Moreover, Jakarta's acceptance of foreign intervention would roil Indonesia's delicate political dynamic. Once, President Wahid indicated that Western logistical assistance might be necessary. In late July, however, he declared: "Indonesia is able to resolve the sectarian war in Molucca Islands itself."

Life in Indonesia is not only about politics. In the face of persecution, believers wonder about God's will. Groundskeeper Tjahyono said that he believes "this is according to God's plan. Christians are under purification from the Lord."

The most Indonesian Christians can expect is charitable aid from private groups. My trip was organized by Christian Freedom International (*www.christianfreedom.org*), a private relief agency based in Front Royal, Virginia. Other organizations are also trying to help.

All around the world, beauty and tragedy are mixed in uncertain portions. Unfortunately, the latter seems to be winning in Indonesia, and there's nothing Washington can (or should try to) do about it.

Doug Bandow is a senior fellow at the Cato Institute and a former special assistant to President Ronald Reagan. He is the author of several books, including Tripwire: Korea and U.S. Foreign Policy in a Changed World.

Letter From the Dominican Republic

by William Mills

Bearing Gifts From Afar

◆

It was just before Christmas, and for some reason I thought the fishing would be good in the Dominican Republic during that time of the year. I had no information to that effect, but a friend, who does not fish, spoke favorably of DR (that's how many refer to the country). The tarpon had left Florida, and I thought they might be there; at least it would be warm. I had the name of my friend's friend who runs a dive shop on the north coast. I was not planning to dive, but the fellow was from Missouri, where I live now. He even agreed to meet my evening flight. The plane was late, of course, causing him to wait a couple of hours outside customs. Adding to his wait was our wait for my tube of rods that I had mistakenly checked. They did not arrive for several days.

We left the Puerta Plata Airport and drove to nearby Sosua, where he had fixed me up with a hotel room. The hotel seemed mostly empty, but I was told that, after January 1, it is packed. Still, there were a lot of tourists in town, nearly all from Europe—mainly Germany. I think most were plant workers on cheap one- or two-week all-inclusive "packages." Early in the morning after my arrival, I noticed the Germans were already drinking at the open-air bars. After I walked the few blocks to the dive shop and visited for a while, I returned to find that one of the Germans had another down in the street, banging his head against the stone pavement. Everyone just looked on as if it were a professional match.

I discovered that all local fishing was offshore—not my usual kind, since I prefer the tranquil waters of the mangroves. I inquired about passage to Monte Cristi, several hours away, where I understood there were mangroves. The English-speaking expatriates tend to cluster around their own bars, and I got some information there. I finally ended up at a five-stool bar run by an Austrian on the beach. The Americans and Canadians are living down here to escape high taxation back home; I don't know why Carl the Austrian is here, and I did not ask. At Carl's, I was put in touch with a Dominican-American who had returned to DR, and he agreed to take me to Monte Cristi. I will call him Paco.

One evening, while Paco and I chatted in the growing darkness at Carl's, the whores began to come out. Some were already drunk. The authorities have made some effort to stop them from badgering the tourists, since it hurts the sales at the gift shops lining the beach. In the twilight, a form rose behind a dune, threw up, disappeared, then rose again. Everyone just watched, as they had watched the fighting Germans. Live and let die. Finally, the form materialized in a shiny, red dress caked with sand and staggered off down the street. Sex is a thriving business in Sosua, and not solely for men. Very handsome young women get off the planes from Europe and expect to buy their pleasures.

As Paco drove me to Monte Cristi, he told me stories. The young women ask if he has AIDS. The answer for these innocents is a piece of paper run off on a laboratory computer saying he does not. Of course, it is two or three weeks old. Paco, I learned incidentally, had been fired from a dive shop for groping the girls underwater. One or two had complained. He laughingly told me that one of the young German girls told him to "take advantage of me, but don't hurt me." Huh?

After several hours, we arrived at Monte Cristi. Founded in 1533, it's a town of 20,000 people. Paco began to query people near the beach. He stopped one fisherman who was working on his nets. In the course of the conversation, the fisherman-diver told him he had caught a thousand-pound shark. Paco later explained this was on a hand line. The loquacious fisherman also informed him that his partner had tried to kill him while he was in a dive by cutting off the engine on the air compressor, because he had some money on him.

Further down the beach, Paco stops at an American archaeologist's compound. The archaeologist is working underwater on a Dutch ship that sank in the 17th century. One of his sons approached on a motorcycle. He had tattoos all over his arms, but seeing Paco's tattoos he was rapt with admiration. Paco pulled off his shirt and offered the full exhibition. The one of the underwater diver with a woman took "best of show."

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The previous stop had given us a lead on a possible guide and boat for me, so we returned to Monte Cristi. As we asked about in the neighborhood, I saw a father and son carefully grooming one of their cocks for a coming fight. They told us where Rojillo—the man with the boat—lives. We struck a deal to meet Rojillo at my little hotel in town. Paco returned to Monte Cristi, leaving me to pull out every syllable of Spanish I had ever known. No one that I encountered thereafter spoke any English, which was good in more than one way: I got to practice my Spanish, and no English or German meant no more tourists.

Next morning, Rojillo showed up needing several dollars for gas. Returning home, he picked up the outboard motor, hauling it and the gas to the beach on the back of his small motorcycle. He came back for me, and off I went on the back of his motorcycle, hanging on to my tackle and the rods that had eventually shown up. A host of drivers prowl the streets of town on motorcycles, looking for fares. They are called "moto-conchos." Rojillo warns me about the hot exhaust. An exhaust burn on the ankle or leg is called a "Dominican tattoo."

The boat was anchored out in the water. It turns out this was not Rojillo's boat, but a friend's. We retrieved it and set off for the mangroves. They are not very extensive, and the fishing is lousy. In three days, we caught virtually nothing except my first puffer fish, which is a fairly funny animal. When frightened, it puffs up into a ball, extending its many spines for protection. When we released it, it floated off like a balloon. On the third day of unsuccessful fishing, Rojillo finally told me that this is not the season for fishing, as he took out a very small bottle of beer and bit the cap off. To complete the comedy, a large touring boat full of Germans came by, and the video cameras began to hum, capturing two natives fishing.

Back at the hotel, I paid off the good-humored Rojillo and made arrangements to get a driver back to Sosua. The desk clerk said it should be about $20. He has a relative. For me, the price is $60.

It was Sunday evening, and I went to the hotel dining room, which has some open-air tables next to the street, in time for the car and motorcycle display. The local young men were displaying themselves to the young women by gunning their motorcycles as loud as they would go. (The one or two who could afford cars turned their sound systems to the max: mating ritual with boom box.) I engaged the man at the next table in conversation over the noise. The topic of Sosua came up, and he said, "Sosua is very, very corrupt." He was from Santa Domingo and gave me his card, saying, "Now you have a friend in Santa Domingo."

The waiter brought my dinner and wine. As I began to eat, a truck came by and sprayed mosquito poison, which settled on my food. Experienced people quickly covered their faces with paper napkins. Later, lying in bed as the mosquitoes bit me, I stared at a print of the Mona Lisa on the wall.

Back in Sosua, my friend at the dive shop was throwing a big Christmas party at a nearby hotel. It will always seem strange to me to have Christmas in warm weather, but this was a happy affair. We had Christmas pig and plenty to drink. Santa Claus was a black woman.

Dominicans are a happy people, and I wonder how long it will take tourism to change that. Given the difficulties they live under, it seems a miracle they can laugh. One writer has observed that no form of government has ever worked well in DR. They're working on their 25th constitution. The per capita income is $1,000 a year, or less than $3 a day.

The government has decided to welcome big-time tourism. Most of the tourists in Sosua will never visit the rest of the country to see, for example, small-town life in Monte Cristi. Many will never leave their hotel compound. It's true that the hotel and restaurant business provides normal jobs for people, and it has paid to upgrade water systems and roads in the tourist towns. But most Dominicans cannot afford to go there. It's especially demoralizing to rural young women and men, who make three to five dollars a day for decent work when they could make a great deal more than that for an hour's work as prostitutes for European or American tourists. Some people, no matter how good an alternative is offered to them, still choose prostitution. It has a lot to do with laziness, I've concluded. But that's another story.

I did not find the Sosua circus in little towns such as Monte Cristi, or up in the mountains. This is where normal life takes place. Further, there is good fishing at the right time in DR. And DR is not in any way unique in its desire for quick and easy money. In my native state of Mississippi, the general populace was overwhelmingly opposed to casino gambling, but politicians sneaked the legislation through (partly by claiming to protect church cakewalks and bingo from the sheriff). Now, rural towns near the Gulf Coast cannot keep newly trained deputies, because the casino towns need more lawmen to combat the rise in crime, and they can pay higher salaries. In the first eight months after the legislation passed, casinos brought in $44.4 million in tax revenue; in fiscal year 1999, $282 million.

On my last day in Sosua, I found about $20 in Dominican money lying on the sidewalk. I guess it had been dropped by one of the drunks while leaving a nearby bar. Albert Schweitzer remarked that coincidence is the pseudonym that the good Lord uses when he does not wish to be recognized. I felt saintly for a split-second when I walked back up the street and gave the money to a beggar who sat all day by the curb on twisted legs. *Feliz Navidad.*

William Mills

Santa Claus visits Sosua, Dominican Republic.

William Mills is a corresponding editor for Chronicles.

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by Srdja Trifkovic

Will President Bush Resist the Global Interventionists?

In the second presidential debate last October, George W. Bush warned Vice President Gore that it is not America's role to patrol the planet and to arrange other peoples' lives in its own image. The United States must be proud and confident of our values, he said, "but humble in how we treat nations that are figuring out how to chart their own course."

This was a breath of fresh air after Madeleine Albright's triumphalist ravings about the "indispensable nation." Other rays of hope included Bush's pledge to order a review of America's foreign commitments and his promise to "scrutinize open-ended deployments, reassess U.S. goals, and ascertain whether they can be met." The appointments of Condoleezza Rice as national security advisor and Colin Powell as secretary of state have further encouraged hopes that Bush will usher in a new era of pragmatic diplomacy, based on rationally defined interests rather than ideological obsessions.

So far, the President has displayed a healthy disinterest in foreign affairs. While Beltway sophisticates may gasp in disbelief at Bush's famous confusion of Slovakia with Slovenia, or his reference to Greeks as "Grecians," his focus on domestic issues is comforting. The really dangerous presidents are the professorial know-it-alls like Woodrow Wilson, who intend to boss the rest of the world around because of their presumed omniscience.

The battle for Bush's ear is far from over, however, and some whisperers speak with forked tongues. Several presidential advisors belong to the Council on Foreign Relations, which has traditionally provided the internationalist cadre of the U.S. foreign-policy elite, regardless of which party occupies the White House. There are people on his team—notably Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle—whose hegemonist malevolence is comparable to Mrs. Albright's but who are also more competent and "rational." Bush's guiding principles, insofar as they exist, appear contradictory; it is far from certain whether they will be strong enough to resist pressure from the hegemonists.

President Bush readily admits that he defers to his advisors on foreign issues: "I may not be able to tell you exactly the nuances of the East Timorian [sic] situation," he told the *New York Times* last year, but he would "ask the people who've had experience" to guide him. That would be fine for a man imbued with strong core beliefs. But Bush is not an instinctive defender of national sovereignty, and his latent tendencies to transnationalism are demonstrated by his refusal to defend U.S. borders from the migratory invasion that is irreversibly altering America's character. He does not seem concerned with maintaining America's ability to preserve the traditional moral fabric, social structures, and economic interests of her own people.

The same flaws afflict the new national security advisor. While Rice is a hard-working professional, her lack of an articulated strategic vision could make her vulnerable to ideologues. Her stated priorities include not only military stability and world free trade but "the spread [sic] of democratic values."

Vice President Dick Cheney, however, is a corporate globalist rather than a neoconservative interventionist: Where others see menaces, he sees markets. Still, he is no peacenik: As defense secretary, he directed the U.S. invasion of Panama and Operation Desert Storm. His oil-industry background and connections have naturally made him interested in the forthcoming Caspian Sea oil bonanza. As CEO of Halliburton, the world's largest oil-services provider, Cheney denounced sanctions against Iran because of all the missed business opportunities. He is a traditional Wall Street imperialist, less ideological in his outlook and certainly more evenhanded on Middle Eastern issues than most Beltway experts.

Colin Powell, a self-styled "Rockefeller Republican," has the image of a "reluctant warrior," in contrast to the neocons' triumphalism. He stresses the importance of having clear political objectives before engaging in military intervention, and he favors the use of massive force and an "exit strategy" once the decision has been made. Unfortunately, Powell is strong on means and mute on ends. He completely avoids the question of how objectives should be defined, and he seems to have no definition of vital national interests. This leads to prevarication where clarity should prevail. Powell was opposed to Clinton's intervention in the Balkans at first, and while his support of the Kosovo intervention may be interpreted as a soldier's reflex reaction that, once you are in, you have to get the job done, it also reflected a fundamental lack of intellectual and moral rigor and a confusion of strategy and tactics. His weak convictions will be used by those of his colleagues who hold very strong views—albeit wrong ones—to tailor a straightjacket for Powell and to set the agenda.

Ultimately, only George W. Bush can decide if such pressure will be resisted. It will be strong, since global interventionists are found not only within his administration but in the United Nations, a host of influential think tanks, the military-industrial complex, and the media. Their cry will always be "something must be done," as Simon Jenkins noted in the *Times of London*, because modern America is eerily akin to late-Victorian Britain: "That is what happens when specious ideologies gain a hold on vain men."

At present, President Bush still lacks the confidence of a leader with a developed world view. He is also short on the intellectual apparatus needed to counter the hegemonist intellectuals who yearn to run the planet. On the other hand, the Bush family has never felt comfortable with ideologues. And President George W. Bush is a short-tempered man with a streak of haughtiness, which will be a handy asset if some neocon starts lecturing him.

In the end, the Texas oil mafia may well prove to be the best faction of the new administration. They may be greedy and amoral, but we can hope that they will resist the temptation to invent new missions, lay down new embargoes, and fabricate new courts. Unlike some of their advisors, Bush and Cheney are at least recognizably human.

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POLITICS

Everything Old Is New Again

by Janet Scott Barlow

Maureen Dowd, premier columnist for the *New York Times*, is possessed of a rare professional gift: She can be mean (often really mean) and funny (often very funny) at the same time. What's more, her potent powers of observation and sheer talent as a writer usually combine to mitigate her predictable Washington cynicism.

But with the election of George W. Bush, Maureen Dowd is behaving like a writer off her feed. She is not all that mean lately, and not all that funny, either. And she's certainly not very incisive. What she is, it seems, is bothered—*invested*. And for a writer like Dowd, one whose every column is a precarious balance between humor and criticism, being bothered, being invested—caring—is like throwing a fistful of salt into a delicately seasoned sauce: It's ruination.

I have no idea what kind of President George W. Bush will become; but he is already an interesting public presence because he has demonstrated that it's possible for Maureen Dowd, the woman who had the Clintons' number like no one else, to miss the point and miss it completely. One of the many fascinating consequences of the 2000 election is that, for the first time, Dowd's surveys of the political landscape reflect not the faintest understanding of the view. In other words, the sharpest gal around just doesn't get it. Over the years, Dowd's columns have been great, and they've been lousy; she's been right, and she's been wrong. But never has she looked silly—until now. An examination of the reasons behind this turn of events yields revelations that are signified by, but far more important than, the thinking of the *New York Times*' most talked-about columnist.

In early January, Maureen Dowd wrote a piece complaining that George W. Bush, along with the men and women chosen to staff his administration, are boring. "Where is W.'s boomerness?" she demanded. "If Bill and Al tried too hard to be trendy," she went on, "W. tries too hard not to be." Which two words in those sentences suggest the source of Dowd's current disorientation? The words are *boomerness* and *trendy*, and it is not an overstatement to say that Maureen Dowd is completely preoccupied with both, a fact which is revealed in everything she writes, whatever her subject.

Every so often, Dowd offers up a "girly" column, a piece filled with talk of high-priced face creams, upscale handbags, and cashmere sweater sets—"trendy" stuff, you might say. That she knows of such things—and writes of such things—suggests she cares about such things: things that are in, with it, happening. Maureen Dowd cares greatly—in a boomerish, I'm-actually-above-it-all sort of way—about what is hip. What she does not understand—and here is the source of her problem with the Bush team—is what is cool.

The difference between the outgoing and the incoming presidential administrations is all about the dissimilarity of hip and cool. In a nutshell: Hip entails effort; cool just is. Hip comes and goes; cool is eternal. Hip is about attitude; cool is about essence. Hip is, yes, trendy; cool doesn't know from trends. (And since the first rule of cool is *Don't try to be hip*, I'd say it speaks well for Bush's cool potential that he has, as Dowd disapprovingly puts it, "a defiant anti-trendy streak.") Cool is a mysterious combination of self-possession (which is not the same as self-confidence), self-knowledge (which is not the same as self-awareness), excellence (choosing and then meeting high standards), and humor—that is, the coloration of a unique personality.

By that measure, the coolest man in America at this moment is a balding, overweight, white guy with a problematic ticker and not a trendy bone in his body. I am speaking of Dick Cheney. By the rules of cool, which have been all but forgotten in the boomers' slavish pursuit of hipness, Dick Cheney is the real deal. He's The Man. (Some would say The Man is Colin Powell. But I'd pick Cheney over Powell because Powell is just a tad too aware of his own coolness.) And Cheney is the most positive thing to happen to this country in years—not necessarily for his politics but for his public comportment, his demeanor.

When Dick Cheney speaks, he says no more than he has to and no less than he needs to. When asked a question, he either answers it or explains why he won't answer it. And like many of the men and women with whom Bush has surrounded himself, Cheney seems to view language as a storehouse (if not a treasure trove; after all, he's in politics), a place from which words are to be borrowed, used carefully, then put back in their proper spot. He appears to operate from the simple premise that the purpose of language is to clarify meaning, not obliterate it, a premise which, in the context of our times, generates but one heartfelt response: *Holy cow*!

What Maureen Dowd finds depressing, I consider thrilling: the re-emergence of politicians who dare to be honestly boring. Call me easy, but it's enough to put a spring in my step and a song in my heart. I even welcome George W.'s awkward, self-stifled verbal style—especially after eight years of a president who viewed language as his personal river, a president who was never happy until the Big Muddy had overflowed its banks, leaving every citizen within earshot squirming in clammy socks and squishy shoes.

We keep hearing that the Bush team is a "throwback." What is not noted—apparently because it's not comprehended—is how shocking it is these days to create a (nonironic) throwback to anything. In her Bush-generated doldrums, Maureen Dowd wrote, "There is nothing about the government President-elect W. is putting together that feels the least bit modern." She went on to lament that the "men [Bush] will rely on to tell him what to do . . . reflect a bland, unadventurous adherence to tradition."

I am a great fan of Maureen Dowd's talent, but she is an example of what can happen when you spend too much time thinking that cashmere sweaters represent anything other than a really expensive way to keep warm. The "boomerness" she misses in George W. Bush occupies so large a place in her own persona that it blinds her to the nature of our

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current culture. The fact is, we live in times that are so relentlessly and obsessively "modern" that the most modern thing a president could possibly do is to put together a government that feels "not the least bit modern." In a society that has proudly assaulted as "judgmental" everything from federal law to everyday etiquette, it is positively futuristic—it's downright *radical*, for God's sake—to be "bland and unadventurous." And the government officials whom a yawning Dowd dismisses for their "adherence to tradition"? In the post-Clinton United States of America, those tradition-bound officials can properly be called revolutionaries.

My own hope is that the Bush traditionalists/revolutionaries have the courage to bore us silly. I am ready for people who go off and do their jobs while keeping their lips buttoned and their pants zipped. After two terms of the drama queen and the emperor (to be clear: Bill Clinton was the drama queen; Hillary, the emperor), I am ready for the very modern idea of being entertained by boredom.

Janet Scott Barlow, who writes from Cincinnati, Ohio, is the author of The Nonpatriotic President: A Survey of the Clinton Years *(Chronicles Press).*

RELIGION

Debating the "Gentile Vice"

by Mark Tooley

At its annual "Ministers Week" lectures last year, the theological school of Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas provided a revealing window into the contemporary debate within mainline church circles over homosexuality.

Taking a pro-homosexuality approach was Victor Furnish, a professor at SMU's Perkins School of Theology. Defending the traditional Christian stance was Richard Hays of Duke Divinity School in North Carolina. Both seminaries are Methodist institutions, but they train ministers for nearly all major mainline Protestant churches.

Over 500 clergy and laity attended the Perkins event. Furnish and Hays were both frank about their beliefs. For Furnish, the Scriptures are not the final authority but an incomplete record that points to a higher authority. For Hays, the Bible is God's revealed will.

Furnish warned against accepting the "words of the Bible as collectively the Word of God." He seeks guidance from the "kergymatic core" of the Bible, which affirms the love and faithfulness of God. This "core" apparently excludes what the Bible says about the physical world, political institutions, domestic and social relationships, and sex. The Bible's attitudes toward these areas are "time-bound and culturally conditioned"; therefore, they are not reliable guides for today, according to Furnish.

"This means we must resist speaking ponderously of Scriptures as providing norms that are valid for all times and places," Furnish argued. "Specific moral norms are always derived from one truly absolute norm, which is the grace and faithfulness of God." He did not describe how God's grace can be fully defined without reliance on the biblical text.

"We do the Bible no honor by regarding it as an inert static body of teachings boxed up and tied tight by the creeds and church laws," Furnish said. The Bible must "remain open to critique and correction like all of our creeds and statements of faith."

The Bible's sexual morality was created by "patriarchalism," "stereotyping of gender roles," and "total ignorance concerning the complexities of sexual identity," according to Furnish. For the Church to establish which parts of the Bible carry "authority," Scripture must conform to what we know about God as disclosed in Christ and to what we know about "Creation."

Specific Scriptures that condemn homosexual behavior are "simply no longer credible," Furnish claimed. "None can stand unchallenged given what modern research is teaching us about human sexuality," he said. The Apostle Paul had "no knowledge of sexual orientation."

The Bible's expectation of sexual monogamy, according to Furnish, passes the twofold test of conforming to what we know of God's love and to our modern knowledge of the world. But the prohibitions against homosexual behavior and divorce fail.

Responding to Furnish, Hays declared that the biblical texts about homosexuality speak with one voice, and "there is no serious doubt about their meaning." The argument that Jesus never addressed homosexuality shows a "lack of historical perspective," Hays insisted. Jesus was a first-century Jew who agreed with Jewish teaching that homosexual conduct was a "gentile vice." If he had taught anything else, it would have been the "basis for controversy and slander by his enemies."

Although all scriptural texts agree in their disapproval of homosexuality, Hays argued that a theological position should not be based exclusively on such passages. Instead, his own views, and those of the historic Church, are based on a constant message throughout both the Old and New Testaments that man and woman are created for each other.

Hays said that a homosexual orientation, even if involuntary, is not morally neutral. All of us live in the flesh within a fallen Creation and are prone to sins that are not freely chosen. "The Bible undercuts our obsession with sexual fulfillment," Hays argued. "Lives of freedom, joy, and service are possible without sexual relations." The Bible does not make sexuality the "basis for defining a person's identity or for finding meaning and fulfillment in life."

Although the Bible does speak of sexual practices, it never acknowledges classes of persons based on sexual practice. And the Bible "never considers sexuality merely a private matter between consenting adults."

"The Bible tells a story with which we find our identity," Hays said. "The Bible doesn't always tell us what we should do. But when it does, we should listen long and hard . . . " He argued against modern studies that are "influenced by understandings of humanity that are at odds with the New Testament."

"We cannot decide what it means to live in holiness before God by doing empirical studies taking polls about contemporary sexual practices," Hays insisted. "Contemporary culture . . . has produced enormous confusion, anxiety and debasement in our sexual lives."

Victor Furnish proposes to judge biblical material on what is "credible" for "modern people," Hays noted. He called Furnish's proposal ironic, since modern people have produced an unprecedented epidemic of divorce, sexually transmitted diseases, teen pregnancy, and abortion.

"In view of our propensity for self-deception, I think it is prudent and necessary to let Scripture and Christian tradition order the life of the Church on this painfully controversial matter," Hays concluded.

Other speakers besides Furnish espoused pro-homosexuality arguments. Charles Curran, a Catholic priest who lost his teaching position at The Catholic

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University of America because of his open disagreement with Roman Catholic teachings on sexuality, now teaches at SMU. He urged "freedom" on "doubtful" issues that are "peripheral" to the faith, such as homosexuality.

"What we have today is an understanding of the homosexual orientation that we did not have before," Curran said. "I don't see how you can demand celibacy of people with a homosexual orientation." He argued that a truly catholic and universal Church tries to embrace vastly different Christian perspectives.

Joerg Rieger, who teaches systematic theology at Perkins, sounded a similar theme. "The presence of gays and lesbians in the Church might provide us with a unique opportunity to think through the question of what really matters in the Church and in theology today," he said. "We need to rethink also what it means to live in committed partnerships. And we will find that we need to rethink not only our attitude towards homosexual relationships, but our attitude towards heterosexual relationships as well."

Asbury Theological Seminary president Maxie Dunnam argued that it is not simply homosexuality but the understanding of scriptural authority that is dividing the Church. Asbury, an evangelical Wesleyan school near Lexington, Kentucky, trains ministers in the Methodist, Nazarene, and Salvation Army denominations.

"Is it any wonder that our Church is in turmoil when men and women preparing for the ministry are being mentored in the faith by persons who disregard our founding and primary source documents so as to diminish the Bible as God's Word?" Dunnam asked. Dunnam claimed that those who have represented this "revisionist stance" have not been "direct and honest" about their disagreements with the Church's historic beliefs. "We are deeply divided over what has become a fundamental fault line: the authority of Scripture and the person and work of Jesus Christ."

Dunnam focused on the dangers of doctrinal pluralism, which claims that "all roads lead to God," contradicting both Scripture and the "central understanding of the church" for 2,000 years. "Doctrinal pluralism is an untenable principle to guide us. It will divide or render impotent the Church as a saving force."

Much of mainline Protestantism has indeed been rendered impotent, culturally and spiritually. The debate over homosexuality is just one example of the theological turmoil. But not every knee has bent toward Baal. The battle is far from over, and those who resist modern sexual fashion within the churches may not only prevail; their witness for classical Christian beliefs regarding sexual morality may reinvigorate appreciation for all of Christian orthodoxy.

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Liberal Slander

by David Mills

At events such as the Episcopal Church's General Convention, held last July in Denver, traditional believers get slandered in all sorts of ways, most of them indirect but effective. (And the most energetic apostles of inclusivity, dialogue, and openness never, ever call the slanderers to account.)

Issues, a daily one-page sheet of commentary, provided several examples. It was put out by a group called the "Coalition," which included the homosexualist lobby Integrity, the Episcopal Peace Fellowship, the Episcopal Women's Caucus, the Union of Black Episcopalians, the Episcopal Environmental Network, and five similar groups.

Although there is no logical connection between pacifism and homosexuality, to be a member of the Episcopal Peace Fellowship seems to entail supporting Integrity, and to join the Union of Black Episcopalians—black Episcopalians have traditionally been a rather conservative group—is to endorse the extreme feminism of the Episcopal Women's Caucus. I suppose the connection is that the Coalition represents the different interests of the political left, rather than any coherent theology.

Sometimes, the insults are delivered indirectly. As religion columnist Terry Mattingly reported, when one conservative group launched a campaign with the headline "God's love changed me," giving the testimonies of people who had been healed of all sorts of problems (including active homosexuality), liberal activists took to wearing shirts saying "Oppose hate language, no matter how it is disguised." As Mattingly put it: "Write it down—healing equals hate."

It might be worth exploring why homosexual activists demand public approval—not just a "don't ask, don't tell" sort of tolerance, but active, public, official approval. I wonder, listening to the intensity and anger with which they demand that the Church bless their unions, if they are not trying desperately to suppress an inner voice telling them that what they do is wrong.

The more direct insults are delivered in several forms, some more obvious than others. First, and most indirect, is the tiresome misinterpretation of conservative motives and arguments. This implies, without explicitly charging, that conservatives are either stupid or dishonest.

In one day's *Issues*, the president of Integrity, "openly gay priest" (their words) Michael Hopkins, was quoted as saying that "We are tired of being told that the Episcopal Church does not ordain gays and lesbians." By the passive "being told," he meant being told by moral conservatives; by "are tired," that conservatives tell this lie over and over again.

I don't know of anyone who has ever claimed that, as a matter of fact, the Episcopal Church does not ordain homosexuals. Even when we didn't know who was in the closet, everyone knew that there was a closet, and some had the depressing knowledge that it was a rather large closet.

This claim—one of the more popular of the homosexualist arguments—is an attempt to confuse the matter of whether the Church ought to ordain such people by making the practice seem normal and even normative. If the Church has always ordained homosexual people, some will think, publicly admitting the fact by officially approving the practice will not make much difference.

The second form of indirect insult is the display of liberal sensitivity and godliness, which has as a corollary the insensitivity and ungodliness of conservatives. The possibility that conservatives might simply have a different understanding of right, wrong, and the human good cannot be acknowledged.

During the Convention's long debates on homosexuality, speakers would say, usually with puzzlement in their voices, "What is the danger of saying 'yes' to the love of one person for another?" (The Convention gave its approval to "couples in the Body of Christ who are living in other life-long committed relationships"—not only homosexual marriages but other irregular sexual liaisons.)

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The purpose of this question—another popular homosexualist argument—is to make any appeal to principle look cold, abstract, inhuman, and heartless. In the average American mind, "love" justifies almost anything because it is uncontrollable and requires us to do things no one else can judge.

Finally, there is the straightforward insult. In another *Issues*, Katie Sherrod, a longtime writer for the Episcopal Women's Caucus (a group that is exactly what you would expect it to be), claimed that "Conservative writers repeatedly have accused the lesgays at the convention of being willing to do anything to achieve their legislative goals."

As insults go, this seems a fairly mild one, until you think about it. It describes conservative writers as people who make wild, hysterical, and unfair accusations, and thus it slanders not only their judgment but their character. These people, you are meant to think, are meaner than junkyard dogs.

I read nearly everything written by conservative writers at the Convention, and not one ever wrote (or said, for that matter) that the "lesgays" would do "anything" to get what they want, even granting that "anything" is an exaggeration.

I thought it interesting, and perhaps revealing, that Sherrod did not use the now-standard term "lesbigay." "Lesgay" was the homosexualists' preferred term of five or more years ago. It seems to have been expanded to include bisexuals. (The question is whether "lesbi" is short for "lesbian" or for "lesbian and bisexual.")

It is hard to find out from those who use the phrase which they mean, perhaps because including bisexuals would destroy their claim to favor monogamous relationships, which is one of the foundations of their current apologetic. The ambiguity of the word seems to be a rhetorical disguise, signaling the truth to insiders but hiding it from those outsiders whose good will they want to keep. (The average "centrist" Episcopalian approves of sodomy as long as those involved otherwise keep the form of respectable marriage—which is to say, have one committed partner at a time.)

Today, homosexualists sometimes use the word "lesbigaytrans." This includes not only bisexuals but transsexuals and the "transgendered," meaning people who want to live as the other sex without going through the surgery.

I don't mind liberal slander. You get used to it. And, in part, such slanders are due punishment for one's sins of uncharity. We (conservative writers) do throw punches, and—being sinners—sometimes we will hit below the belt, especially in the heat of a fight.

But generally, we fight by the rules. Not being relativists, we know we are required to speak as fairly and honestly and charitably as possible, even when we have to knock our opponent to the mat because he is attacking something we must defend, and knock him down again when he gets up. We know that God is watching, and He has standards.

This makes the conservative's polemic both ruder and kinder at the same time. Ruder, because we will use such unfashionably divisive words as "heretics" when we are speaking of people who teach heresy. Kinder, because we say what we mean and use words that have a specific meaning and which can easily be tested for accuracy.

And our comments are, indeed, often rather impersonal. To say that Smith is a heretic is not (necessarily) to say anything negative about his character; it is only to say that the view he presents as a Christian one is not a Christian one. If he complains that we have slandered him, we can appeal to objective criteria—orthodox Christianity on one side, and his words on the other—and if we find that we are wrong, we will apologize and retract our words.

In contrast, the liberal's polemic is much more personal. He does not meet his opponent on the objective, impersonal grounds of conflicting views of truth. Having avoided that, he has to speak of his opponent as if conservatives were emotionally disturbed or blind or wicked because they do not see the truth that must be so obvious. (It's obvious to him, after all.) Ironically, the liberal's relativism leads him to say not only that the conservative is wrong, but that he is bad.

I wish more liberals would climb into the ring and come out of their corners when the bell rings, not throw an elbow as you walk by. I'd like them to be more direct, like Sherrod, but I'd like them to tell the truth as well.

But even Sherrod's wildly thrown punches and hitting below the belt point out the limits of all the inclusionist rhetoric of mainstream Episcopalianism. She understands that the questions before the Episcopal Church and the other mainline churches are serious matters, that the truth can be known now, and that we need not await the result of "conversations" and dialogues and studies which could go on and on into the future. And she knows that the truth matters, and that it changes people's lives.

She is quite wrong about what that truth is (present polemical manners would require that I begin the sentence with "I think," but in this case, *I know*); but that she fights for truth, and fights in a now somewhat unfashionably aggressive way and with an unfashionable degree of passion, I must applaud.

David Mills, a senior editor of Touchstone: A Journal of Mere Christianity, *is the author of* Knowing the Real Jesus, *forthcoming from Servant.*

MUSIC

Hillbilly Deluxe

by Clark Stooksbury

"Hillbilly." The earliest recorded use of the word is from the *New York Journal* of April 23, 1900. As you might guess from that publication's city of origin, the term was not intended as a compliment. The *Journal* defined a hillbilly as "a free and untrammeled white citizen of Alabama, who lives in the hills, has no means to speak of, dresses as he can, talks as he pleases, drinks whiskey when he gets it, and fires off his revolver as the fancy takes him." Although this is not a completely accurate description of country singer-songwriter Marty Stuart, that has not stopped the Philadelphia, Mississippi, native from adopting the term with a vengeance. His 1989 MCA debut was called *Hillbilly Rock*. The title track from that recording, written by Stuart's occasional songwriting partner, Paul Kennerly, reveals the origins both of Stuart's sound and of his attitude: "It comes from Mississippi, and down in Alabam' / creepin' like a fever all across the land / from deep in the Delta on the Louisiana shore . . ."

Not surprisingly for an artist who willingly adopted the "hillbilly" title at the close of the most homogenizing and centralizing of centuries, Stuart has great respect for musical tradition. He spent much of his youth learning from the masters. He joined Lester Flatt's band in 1972, at the age of 13, and played with him until Flatt retired in 1978. Stuart was

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also a member of Johnny Cash's band.

Respect for tradition is not synonymous with stagnation, and Stuart has done more than simply ape the sounds of his heroes. He has carried the influence of Flatt and other bluegrass legends and Johnny Cash into his solo career. His first album, *Busybee Café*, has a substantial bluegrass and old-time country flavor that is aided by the presence of Earl Scruggs and Doc Watson and songs that include covers of tunes by Flatt and Scruggs and Bill Monroe. *Busybee Café* also features Johnny Cash, who performs his classic tune "Hey Porter."

Hillbilly Rock displays several of Stuart's distinctive sounds. Most of the songs on the album feature a driving beat, often set by a rhythm guitar, along with a tinge of rock 'n' roll and rockabilly. The upbeat tone set by the title track—"as long as it's breezy, as long as it's fast / as long as it's pumpin' honey, it's gonna last"—continues throughout the album, which includes covers of the rockabilly classics "The Wild One," originally recorded by Johnny Horton, and Johnny Cash's "Cry, Cry, Cry." One notable new tune, cowritten by Stuart and Paul Kennerly, cries out for the recording talents of the King of Rock 'n' Roll. Alas, "Hard to Hold" premiered some 12 years after Elvis Presley either died or went into hiding, but Stuart does a fine job with this rendition of the time-honored cliché about a man who ain't about to be tied down to no woman: "I've got to get me back to Alabam' / there's something baby you must understand / You can't slip a ring around a travelin' man / Honey I'm hard to hold . . . "

On his follow-up release, *Tempted*, Stuart makes clear to his listeners where he is coming from. The liner notes tell of a conversation with a reporter who asked the singer where he fit "in the scheme of country music these days." These are liner notes, mind you, not a memoir, and so they may have been composed by a coke-snorting Corporate Suit in L.A. trying to sound like Stuart. But if they were, the Suit did a good job: "I was raised by the masters that invented the music around here, I'm one of their kids. I feel obligated to carry some of the pure things that they taught me into the 21st century. I mean hard rockin' hillbilly music, that's what I feel. I don't know, maybe I'm a bridge between the past and the future." The music on the disc backs up the words on the label. The newer covers and original tunes feature Stuart's distinctive beat-oriented sound. As a bonus, he includes three covers of classic tunes. The album opens with "I'm Blue, I'm Lonesome," written by Bill Monroe and Hank Williams, and closes with "Get Back to the Country," by Neil Young. The centerpiece is a haunting version of Johnny Cash's "Blue Train."

Stuart's best release to date is *This One's Gonna Hurt You* which came out in 1992. It opens with "Me & Hank & Jumpin' Jack Flash," a dreamy visit to Hillbilly Heaven where Stuart meets Hank Williams. The legend tells him, "You just go on back down there. You make us proud / and remember, wherever you go there's a little hillbilly in every crowd." *This One's Gonna Hurt You* also includes several examples of Stuart's hillbilly patriotism, evident in song titles such as "Down Home," "Now That's Country," and "Honky Tonk Crowd." These tunes blend Stuart's rock-inflected sound with just the right amount of twang. At times, the lyrics celebrate an idealized country existence: "This old Coupe de Ville knows where to go / just a mile or two down that old dirt road / There's a rusty truck and a shotgun shack. / It ain't much but y'all come back!" At other times they display a corn-pone philosophy of life: "You know every man and woman ought to have a place to lay your burdens down. / Y'all can do it in the city, but it ain't the same in the big old towns." In the end, though, it all comes back to the music. "There was a debutante in Dallas who nearly blew my mind. She was raised on caviar and real fine wine / She didn't like hillbilly music and that was more than I could take. I left that lovely little cowgirl waitin' in the Lone Star State. / Cause I had to go where the music was loud. I'm right at home with a honky tonk crowd."

Stuart's latest release is 1999's *The Pilgrim*. It is, in the industry lingo, a "concept album," and the liner notes tell us that it is based on a true story. It may even qualify as a hillbilly opera. For this ambitious project, Stuart assembled an all-star cast that includes George Jones, Johnny Cash, Ralph Stanley, Emmy Lou Harris, and Earl Scruggs. The story evokes the folkie "saga songs" of the 1950's and early 60's. It's about a misfit of a man married to the town beauty queen who, without actually cheating, starts consorting with another man—the Pilgrim. When her husband discovers this, he commits suicide in their presence. After years of suffering the disgrace of the scandal, the woman marries the Pilgrim, who has returned from his pilgrimage. The story line is strangely unsatisfying; it lacks drama. There is no adulterous act. The Pilgrim remains virtuous because of his ignorance of the woman's marriage. The only action is a suicide by a seriously disturbed man who made the mistake of marrying out of his league. And then the story has a happy ending. Compare this with "The Long Black Veil," a hit for Lefty Frizzell in 1959, or "Miller's Cave," recorded by Hank Snow in 1960. In the former, a man is hanged for murder because the only way he can exculpate himself is to reveal that he was in "the arms of [his] best friend's wife" at the time of the crime. In the latter, a jealous man tracks down his no-good woman and her illicit lover: "caught her out one Sunday Morning, with a man they called Big Dave / Meanest man in Waycross, Georgia, I'd rather fight a mountain lion in Miller's Cave . . . I said you'll pay, both you and Dave / I must see you in your graves / They laughed at me and then I shot 'em / I took their cheatin' schemin' bones to Miller's Cave / That woman made me feel unwanted, but I showed her I was brave / Most wanted man in the state of Georgia, but they'll never find me 'cause I'm lost in Miller's Cave." These are stories with real drama, in which people pay a price for their acts, and happy endings would be out of place.

The Pilgrim's weak story line, however, is more than compensated for by some excellent mandolin work by Stuart and an intriguing use of guest artists. Who follows the "plot" of a compact disc anyway?

Marty Stuart rose to prominence with a generation of performers who have been around for too long now to be considered "young" or "new," the irritating buzzwords that accompanied their rise to prominence in the early 1990's. This crowd has a well-deserved reputation for producing schlocky, middle-of-the-road music—more Wal-Mart than "Your Cheatin' Heart." However, this should not obscure the accomplishments of those performers who have made consistently good music. Stuart is one of the few of his generation with a fair amount of mainstream exposure (in radio play and Nashville Network appearances) who is ready to shed his status as junior partner to the legendary performers and assume his place as a star in the hillbilly cosmos.

Clark Stooksbury writes from Knoxville, Tennessee.

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In The Dark

by George McCartney

Odysseys

Homer's *Odyssey* is the perfect narrative form for film. What other medium is as well equipped to render fantastic journeys filled with willful gods, unreasonable monsters, and enchanting women? This explains why three recent films have drawn upon the epic for their inspiration.

In *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, filmmaking brothers Joel and Ethan Coen have decided to go James Joyce one better. Ireland's Homer set his *Ulysses* in Dublin of 1904. The Coens have placed theirs in Depression-era Mississippi, named him Ulysses Everett McGill (George Clooney), and introduced him by quoting Homer's invocation to the muse. Furthermore, they have blessed him with a tireless Odyssean optimism quite invulnerable to the travails that beset him at every turn.

When we first meet Everett, he's making a break from a chain gang, taking two other convicts with him (they happen to be chained together). He's determined to return to his wife, whose name is, naturally, Penney (Holly Hunter). There's just one problem: Although this Odysseus is cheerfully ready for all occasions, he doesn't have the wiliness his namesake possessed, and so he frequently finds himself overwhelmed by the various challenges thrown in his path. These include three enchanting sirens he and his dim-witted accomplices (John Turturro and Tim Blake Nelson) find washing their unmentionables in a branch of the Mississippi River. These cuties wield Circean powers. In their seductive wake, they leave a lower life-form where once stood what passed for a man. Shortly afterward, the Cyclops shows up in the mountainous form of John Goodman, a viciously cunning, one-eyed Bible salesman. Then there's the state's governor—Menelaus "Pappy" O'Daniel (Charles Durning)—who believes his political future lies in "mass communicating" on a radio show called Pappy's Hour of Flour Power. Here, Ulysses Everett rises to the occasion, taking to the microphone to sing "A Man of Constant Sorrow" And becoming an overnight sensation.

All of these episodes are carried off with a beguiling comic energy. Nevertheless, at the final credits, I felt curiously dissatisfied. The Coens have created a problem for themselves by invoking the *Odyssey* and then treating it as merely the occasion for light humor. Joyce got comic leverage from the epic, but he also used it to demonstrate how the past presses ineluctably on the present, shaping us in ways we only dimly perceive unless we awaken to its force in our daily lives. For the Coens, however, the past is merely a storeroom from which to filch some amusing episodes.

Case in point: the massive, torchlit Ku Klux Klan assembly Everett and his associates stumble into one night. With its white-gowned, chanting legions performing ritualistic marching routines to an incessant drumbeat, the scene is, at first, genuinely frightening. But the episode quickly descends into an Abbott-and-Costello farce with our heroes scampering about in an attempt to rescue a young black man who's the guest of honor at the evening's lynching. The scene becomes just one more in a series of weightless gags. While there's nothing wrong with this as such, it is a bit of a letdown considering the expectations raised by the film. Not only do the Coens invoke Homer's epic, they steal from Preston Sturges's peerless 1941 film, *Sullivan's Travels*, a genuinely funny and scathing satire in which a pampered Hollywood musical director wants to make a socially conscious film entitled *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* Few directors have skewered pretension and hypocrisy as cleverly as Sturges, and I couldn't help feeling a bit cheated when the Coens—who clearly admire him—didn't try to do the same. They seem to think their clever, postmodern recycling of earlier works constitutes artistic achievement in itself. It doesn't, especially when the earlier works are so much more engaging.

Intentionally or not, in his adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's *All the Pretty Horses*, director Billy Bob Thornton comes closer to the *Odyssey* than the Coens. Thornton has followed McCarthy's narrative closely, tracing the travails of John Grady Cole (Matt Damon), a young man who, after being forced to leave his beloved family ranch in Texas, finds himself wandering through Mexico in 1949. In this unfamiliar landscape, he meets physical and cultural challenges for which he has no guidebook. He must rely on his native wit and physical resilience. He soon comes under the spell of a local enchantress and is later arrested by a myopically singleminded authority. He descends into a hellish Mexican penitentiary where he learns things about himself he had never suspected and subsequently struggles to return home. Whether McCarthy designed his plot with Homer in mind, the epic parallel is there, and so is its moral weight.

In the novel, Cole and his partner, Lacey Rawlins (Henry Thomas), are presented as American innocents who, without being quite aware of it, yearn for a tradition that would nurture their inherent nobility. At the narrative's outset, Rawlins asks Cole what he believes in. Is there a God, a heaven, a hell? Cole replies, "I guess you can believe what you want to." This improvisational theology is the only spiritual legacy his American upbringing has provided him. It will be severely tested by what he learns in Mexico.

Cole wants nothing more than to con-

O Brother, Where Art Thou?

Produced by Buena Vista Pictures and Touchstone Pictures
Directed by Joel Coen
Screenplay by Ethan Coen with help from Homer
Released by Buena Vista Pictures

All the Pretty Horses

Produced by Columbia Pictures and Miramax Films
Directed by Billy Bob Thornton
Screenplay by Ted Tally from a novel by Cormac McCarthy
Released by Miramax Films and Sony Pictures

Traffic

Produced by Bedford Falls and Initial Entertainment Group
Directed by Steven Soderbergh
Screenplay by Stephen Gaghan
Released by Initial Entertainment Group

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tinue working on his grandfather's cattle ranch. When the old man dies, however, Cole's mother quickly sells the land to oil developers and leaves for California to become an actress. She represents modern America: Rather than nurture what little tradition she's been born into, she cashes it in for quick money and vulgar fame. Cole, on the other hand, is a horseman, even instinctively so—he is a knight, though he lacks the ethos of a court. In Mexico, he comes to work on a cattle ranch that has been in the Rocha y Villareal family for over 170 years, a 27,000-acre spread as old as America and run by a family more European than Mexican. While its current owner, Don Hector, recognizes and honors the boy's natural nobility and love of the land, Cole is not ready to deal with the intricacies of a tradition he can only begin to understand. Bewitched by Hector's daughter, Alejandra (Penélope Cruz), he has no way of knowing what he's getting into. When she provocatively demands that he let her ride the stud stallion under his care, he halfheartedly objects: "You're fixin' to get me in trouble." Knowing better, she replies with a seductive smile, "You are in trouble." McCarthy has been compared with some justice to Hemingway, Faulkner, and Flannery O'Connor. But here he is taking Henry James's lead: Cole is the decent, untutored American hopelessly perplexed by European subtleties.

Thornton has made a better than fair—and, at times, exceptional—adaptation of the novel. Unfortunately, he was forced to cut his original four-hour version in half. What's left is sometimes overly schematic, but it's nevertheless true to McCarthy's intentions. I'd like to see what was cut. While the book has been noted for its terse, objective style, there's a good deal of philosophic comment in the narration, especially when the highly articulate members of the Rocha family take the floor. Since this material is the least congenial to film, it's probably what Thornton was forced to cut.

Although Damon and Thomas are considerably older than the novel's 16- and 17-year-old protagonists, they successfully render their characters' amalgam of toughness and innocence. Spanish actress Penélope Cruz matches them with her portrait of a willful rich girl whose romantic scheming is undone by her youthful naiveté. Her scenes with Damon are among the film's best. While not conventionally beautiful, she exhibits an old-world femininity that is extraordinarily alluring. For a Circe this charming, losing all might seem a small enough price.

Steven Soderbergh's clever—but finally facile—*Traffic* pursues four separate odysseys to illustrate how the illegal drug trade weaves together people from every class, race, ethnicity, and nationality, trapping them in its corrupting web. Benicio Del Toro plays a good Mexican cop who wants to clean up his city—an improbable aspiration, since he lives in Tijuana. His American counterparts are Don Cheadle and Luis Guzman, two DEA agents who enjoy their work despite its evident futility. Guzman manages to keep his spirits up with the prospect of waging a little unofficial class warfare on the side: "I have dreams about . . . busting the top people, rich people, white people." A quick montage cuts from this dream to its reality at a San Diego country club, where a very pregnant Catherine Zeta-Jones worries about cholesterol as she dines on duck à l'orange. Taking leave of her society friends, she returns home to witness her wealthy and respected husband being taken away in handcuffs. Their lifestyle, it turns out, is supported by importing drugs. At the top of the heap is Ohio State Supreme Court Judge Robert Wakefield (Michael Douglas), who—despite his evident rectitude—is all too easily seduced by an opportunity provided by the drug trade. He has just accepted the president's invitation to become the next "drug czar," an appointment he clearly sees as a stepping stone to higher places. At one point, he proudly announces to his visibly impressed wife, "I'm penciled in for some face time with the president!" His petty hubris leads, with predictable dramatic logic, to an insupportable discovery: His own straight-A 16-year-old daughter is developing a crack-cocaine habit right under his officious nose.

Soderbergh drives home the point that we've lost the drug war. No surprise here; we lost it before ever began. By criminalizing drugs in 1916, America set itself up for today's nightmare. Prohibition is almost always a cure worse than the disease. Volstead's attempt to turn America dry in 1919 resulted in an unprecedented opportunity for criminals, who quickly organized themselves to keep the booze flowing to our republic's good citizens, providing themselves with enormous profits and unprecedented power. (Think Joe Kennedy.) Contraband goods inevitably create what one of the film's prep-school druggies calls an "unbeatable market force." The more we prosecute drug dealers, the more lucrative we make their trade, encouraging others to spread the product.

In one scene, a frustrated Wakefield hectors his staff for solutions, but they can only respond with embarrassed silence. This strains belief. Have you ever met a bureaucrat who doesn't have a ten-point plan to solve every social problem? But we get the point. It's not that these folks have run out of ideas; they never had any to begin with. A few scenes later, Wakefield is finally offered a real solution in a meeting with a Mexican general who has just been appointed his country's version of drug czar. After the general details his plans to combat Mexico's drug cartels, Wakefield asks what he's doing on the treatment side. He smiles and shrugs; "addicts treat themselves; they overdose and there's one less" for the state to worry about. Wakefield manfully clenches his jaw to stifle his outrage at this arrant insensitivity. But why? However coldhearted, the general's laissez-faire policy is at least half right: Those who become addicted to hard drugs must either destroy or cure themselves. It's a truism of psychiatry that no one can be cured of a mental pathology until he wants to be, and addiction is always a symptom of pathology. However well intentioned, unsolicited intervention—whether penal or therapeutic—does not work; it only exacerbates the problem.

Soderbergh is full of good intentions. He even brings Orrin Hatch, Barbara Boxer, William Weld, and other politicos on screen to impart gravitas to the proceedings. But he refrains from reaching the logical conclusion to which his narrative points. The sooner we decriminalize drugs, the sooner we'll take the profit motive out of dealing them. Without that motive, the power of gangsters to corrupt government officials will wither. Then we can turn our full attention to the fools who persist in poisoning themselves.

It's really that simple. Too bad none of our elected representatives has the nerve to say so. C

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* The Rockford Institute's Northern Italian Convivium *

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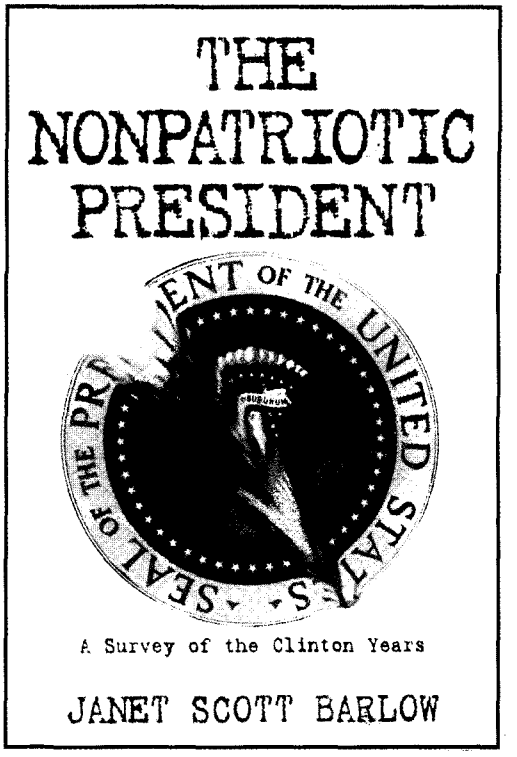

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